



WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE?

A study of global solidarity in the textile and garment industries

Ann Cecilie Bergene

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
The Master's Degree in Human Geography
Department of Sociology and Human Geography
University of Oslo, May 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	7
LIST OF FIGURES	7
INTRODUCTION	11
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	12
THEORETICAL BACKDROP	12
BACKGROUND	14
GLOBAL UNION FEDERATIONS	14
THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRIES	15
CHINA MOPPING UP THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRIES?	16
AN OUTLINE OF THE CONTENTS	17
METHODOLOGY	19
CRITICAL RESEARCH	19
CRITICAL REALISM AND MARXISM	19
THE ONTOLOGY OF CRITICAL REALISM	20
MARXISM AND THE CLASS CONCEPT	21
ANALYSIS AND MODE OF INFERENCE	23
CASE STUDIES	24
METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION	24
INTERVIEWS	25
INFORMANTS	27
OTHER SOURCES OF DATA	28
VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	28
INTERNATIONALISM	31
CONCEPTS	31
A BRIEF HISTORY OF WORKERS' INTERNATIONALISM	32
STRATEGIES	34
PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM	43
GEOGRAPHICAL SCALES	45
NATIONAL CLASS ALLIANCE – THE SONG OF THE SIRENS?	48
THE WORKING CLASS - A SLEEPING GIANT?	57
WHAT IS THE WORKING CLASS?	57
SOLIDARITY	60
BARRIERS TO SOLIDARITY AND DIVISIONS WITHIN THE WORKING CLASS	64
NATIONALITY	64
SECTORS	66
IDEOLOGY	67

CULTURE AND IDENTITY	69
THREE NOTIONS OF SOLIDARITY	70
SOLIDARITY AS ABSTRACT PRINCIPLE AND CONCRETE REALITY	71
GLOBALIZING CLASS POLARIZATION?	73
GLOBAL SOLIDARITY IN A POST-FORDIST ECONOMY	77
 “UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL”	 85
 GLOBAL COMPANIES – GLOBAL UNIONS?	 86
RELICS OF A BYGONE ERA?	87
INTEREST DISAGGREGATION	89
WORKERS FLEEING UNIONS?	92
ASKING THE DEVIL NOT TO BE SUCH A BAD BOY?	93
THE SEPARATION OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICS	94
THE RELATION BETWEEN BUREAUCRACY AND RANK AND FILE	100
THE IDEOLOGY OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP	103
THE CHINESE SPECTRE	107
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND TRADE UNIONS IN CHINA	107
CHINA AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MOVEMENT	109
 GLOBAL UNIONS AS A SOCIAL FORCE	 113
 GETTING GLOBAL UNIONS TO A PROACTIVE AND PRAGMATIC PLACE?	 115
POLITICIZATION – TAKING ON THE NEOLIBERAL AGENDA	123
 CONCLUSION	 129
HOW DOES THE NEW REGIME OF ACCUMULATION IMPACT UPON GLOBAL TRADE UNIONISM?	129
HOW ARE THE GLOBAL UNIONS RESPONDING TO THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS?	131
RELEVANCE IN OTHER CONTEXTS	133
 EPILOGUE: THE EMPIRE’S NEW CLOTHES?	 135
 REFERENCES	 137

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

• ACFTU	All- China Federation of Free Trade Unions
• CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
• GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
• GFA	Global Framework Agreement
• GUF	Global Union Federation
• ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
• ILO	International Labour Organization
• ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
• ITS	International Trade Secretariat
• IMF	International Monetary Fund
• IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Union
• MFA	Multi-Fibre Arrangement
• NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
• OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
• TNC	Transnational Corporation
• UNI	Union Network International
• WCL	World Confederation of Labour
• WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
• WTO	World Trade Organization
• WWI/WWII	World-War I/II

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Trade union affiliations

Figure 2: Galtung's depiction of centre-periphery relations

“If [the worker] resigned himself to accept the will, the dictates of the capitalist as a permanent economical law, he would share in all the miseries of the slave, without the security of the slave.”

(Marx 1865:unnumbered, ch. 12)

INTRODUCTION

Now, as never before, we will need real and effective trade union co-operation and solidarity, nationally, regionally and globally, to protect workers everywhere from the worst ravages of exploitation, injustice and poverty.

The General Secretary of the ITGLWF

The assumptions behind this quote form the backbone of this thesis, the objective of which is to examine global solidarity and trade unionism in a deregulated global capitalism. I have chosen to explore the mechanisms of trade union cooperation in the textile and garment industries through the lens of the increased competition resulting from the phase out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). In doing so, the project aims at a reassessment of the assumption in much of the Marxist theories of imperialism about the conflicting interests between workers in developed and underdeveloped countries, perhaps most explicitly formulated by Galtung (1974). The hypothesis is not that they were wrong at the time of their writing, but that recent changes in the capitalist mode of production and reproduction call for a new assessment.

According to Munck (2002) the labour movement was from its very inception internationalist in outlook, and 1848 saw an important publishing event; *The Communist Manifesto* written by Marx and Engels, the last sentence of which is the much quoted slogan and the title of this thesis “Workers of the world, unite!”. However, the perspective grew more nationalist during the twentieth century, and during the Cold War the international labour movement was torn into two opposing camps. However, the 1990s witnessed a strengthened resistance against the new world order on part of labour organizations, and Munck (2002) is of the opinion that labour movements might be on the way of a rebirth, now in a global perspective. A precondition is, however, that global unions are capable of transcending internal lines of conflict, lines dividing, but maybe also crossing, national and regional trade unions. Despite its long history and renewed vigour, Wills (2001) maintains that labour internationalism is undertheorized both as tradition and practice and that there is a pressing need to remedy the lacuna in the face of global capitalism. I suspect there are some ignored perspectives, and, intending to contribute to theorizing labour internationalism, I will in addition to develop new insights argue for the continued relevance of theories conceived in the 19th century. Stokke (1999) argues that collective mobilization has not acquired centre stage in human geography, not even in the radical political geography tradition. This can be attributed to a disproportionate privilege given to structures at the expense of agents, but also that when agents are taken into consideration it is often corporations and capitalists. According to Amoore (2002) the preoccupation with all things global has tended to disproportionately focus on only one agent; the transnational corporation. The transnationals have been portrayed as the primary vehicles of the globalization process, and theories have delineated their actions and reactions in pursuit of profits (for instance Dicken 2003). Workers are in many instances left out, but when they do enter the picture it is often as passive victims. Hence, I will in this thesis abstain from writing about the

victims of neoliberalism, despite the misery it has wrought, and instead focus on resisters. Writers such as Herod (1995, 1997, 2002) have also contested this one-dimensional view and tried to focus more attention on workers' agency and the spatial fix of labour. This is in accordance with Amoore's (2002) call to delve into the activities and social relations that inform and contest the actions of transnational corporations.

Research questions

An underlying presumption informing the choice of topic and of the perspectives employed in my analysis is that capitalism was restructured after the crisis in the early 1970s, and that this is affecting international trade union cooperation as seen through the operation of Global Union Federations (GUFs). I do not intend to provide an evaluation of the merit of GUFs as organizations, but rather explore the dynamics having an impact upon their operation and how they respond to them. The research questions guiding my work on this thesis are hence as follows:

I How does the new regime of accumulation impact upon global trade unionism?

The first research question relates to the aim of this thesis and deals with the objective conditions for global trade unionism and solidarity. Answering it requires both theoretical and empirical analysis, and I will have to both scrutinize secondary literature and operationalize it through looking at the operation of the GUF I have chosen as case. The concept 'regime of accumulation' is central to regulation theory, an explication of which is provided below, but as the emerging regime of accumulation implies deregulation and increased competition I will analyze the question through the lens of the MFA phase out. The answer to this first question provides the backdrop for my second research question:

II How are global unions responding to the new opportunities and barriers?

If the first research question pertains to the objective conditions, the second seeks an answer to the subjective element of how the global unions are actually responding. Even though the objective conditions point towards global solidarity, effective global trade unionism does not necessarily follow. This question is hence more empirical, but I intend to let secondary literature on international trade unions in general guide my analysis. I will, however, make extensive use of my case, the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation, to see how its staff and affiliates interpret the situation they find themselves in, what strategies they have come up with, how they conceive the organization's role and which changes it has gone through recently.

Theoretical backdrop

In order to revise the argument of neo-Marxists I intend to employ regulation theory to explain the recent changes in the world economy and why this might have a bearing on workers' solidarity. Most important will be the passage from Fordism with its national class compromise to what has been termed post-Fordism (Jessop 1992). The main focus of regulation theory is the regulation of

capital accumulation through economic and political procedures as they change to secure the reproduction of capital in successive stages of capitalism (Jessop 1990). The concept of Fordism applies to one such stage and is central to regulation theory, denoting both a mode of accumulation and a mode of regulation (Lipietz 1982). As a mode of accumulation it is characterized by the assembly line production of standardized goods, while the mode of regulation entails a continuous adjustment of the mass consumption to productivity. Hence, it is often argued that trade unions had their peak and golden age, both in terms of membership and influence, during this stage of capitalism. The building of welfare states carried a 'nationalization' of workers and their organizations in its wake through the symbiosis between the nation building project and the improvements of workers' social existence (Munck 2002). Fordism is regarded as a response to the realization problem inherent in capitalism and which manifested itself in the crisis of the 1930s. In principle, this system of intensive accumulation and monopolistic regulation can go on indefinitely; as increasing the purchasing power of the masses through social articulation makes it possible to avoid overproduction crises (Lipietz 1982). Nevertheless, this presupposes a quite remarkable balancing act to keep profits up, and when the increase in productivity began to stagnate in the 1960s, Fordism soon became an expensive affair. The crisis was precipitated when governments and employers decided to curb the purchasing power. Since this was, according to Lipietz, not a crisis of underconsumption, but a crisis due to insufficient realization of surplus value from invested capital, the solution was not so much to gain new markets as to increase the rate of exploitation. In the light of this, a response has been attempts to raise productivity and a search for cheaper wage zones. Fordism was, according to Peck and Tickell (1994) also undermined by ascending geographical contradictions, of which the contradiction between globalized accumulation and national regulation was prominent. After the Fordist crisis there has been mushrooming literature on a new post-Fordist regime as the final victory over the crisis of Fordism, considered by Peck and Tickell premature conclusions. They point to how this only refers to production and not to any mode of regulation, and they thereby hold that, as yet, no alternative to Fordism exists able to reproduce itself. Since the focus of this study is on the objective conditions for global unions in the new regime of accumulation, I will nonetheless employ the concept of post-Fordism for the lack of a better term.

Harvey (2003) theorizes a new regime of accumulation based on *accumulation by dispossession*. He takes Luxemburg's contention that capitalism is dependent upon the continuous imperialistic appropriation of outsides for its survival, and extends it to the production and reappropriation of internal 'outsides' through dispossessing workers in order to boost profits by repeating primitive accumulation. Being preoccupied with the lack of a new institutional fix in what they term the after-Fordist crisis, Peck and Tickell (1994) contend that the fix must involve global regulation. What role the trade unions could play in this, and what role they are capable of playing, is dealt with in the second research question. Although Peck and Tickell (1994) question the consolidation of a new regime of accumulation, they maintain that the after-Fordist crisis is characterized by a global crisis, instability, accelerated labour exploitation and footlooseness. The weakening of the nation-state is also a part of the theoretical debate concerning contemporary changes. This debate

is, however, not confined to regulation theory. In this strand of thought you find authors like Hardt and Negri (2000) inferring from the 'death' of the nation-state the replacement of imperialism with Empire. With the end of imperialism workers' solidarity needs to be rethought as the focus on national solidarity withers away. Moody (1997) maintains that when business decisions are made by transnationals, any attempt, by either trade unions or governments, to enter the regime competition in order to save jobs will have little or no impact as it leads to a fallacy of composition resulting in a race to the bottom. Furthermore, Munck (2002) identifies tendencies in the direction of a global labour market paving the way for a global trade union response. Capitalism is, however, not globalized in the sense of equalization, and the uneven geography of capitalism is one of the main reasons why deregulation in mobile industries, such as textiles and garment, can have such a huge impact. It is common to look upon workers as the most place-based factor of production, although their plight must be seen in light of relations extending across space (Castree et al. 2004). By virtue of the increasingly intense interconnections, workers in different places may be pitched into relations of either competition or cooperation, depending on the circumstances. Workers' solidarity determines the effectiveness of global trade unionism, although trade unions can be both pushed or pulled towards upscaling their actions (Visser 1998). Push factors consist of pressures to cooperate across national borders due to lack of allies, protection and/or rewards in the national arena. The assumption about an eroded nation-state is reiterated, and it is maintained that the rise of transnational companies threatens national collective bargaining. On the other hand, trade unions may be pulled or drawn towards the international level by other actors, such as governments, international organizations and maybe even employers. Visser suggests that the former dominance of pull factors over push may be historical, and that with increasing global competition matters might change. It is however, important not to dichotomize the national and the international/global level, and in order to avoid a simple either/or depiction of trade unions I will employ the concept of scale, which is the middle term between place and space, so central to human geography.

Background

Global Union Federations

The International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation is a Global Union Federation organizing workers in the textile, garment and leather industries. A Global Union Federation (GUF) is an international federation of national trade unions, which unites workers based on industries, trades or occupations (ICFTU 2001). The GUFs are autonomous, self-governing and democratic organizations, and their role and importance has grown alongside the development of global capitalism; their memberships are on the increase, and the calls for assistance from affiliated trade unions unable to solve their problems at the national scale are getting more and more frequent. According to Herod (1995) the GUFs will become an increasingly important vehicle for fostering and coordinating international trade union work as more and more corporations become transnational, and their databases on the behaviour and

structure of a variety of corporations will be important in future solidarity campaigns. An outline of the relationship between trade unions at different levels is provided in the figure below:

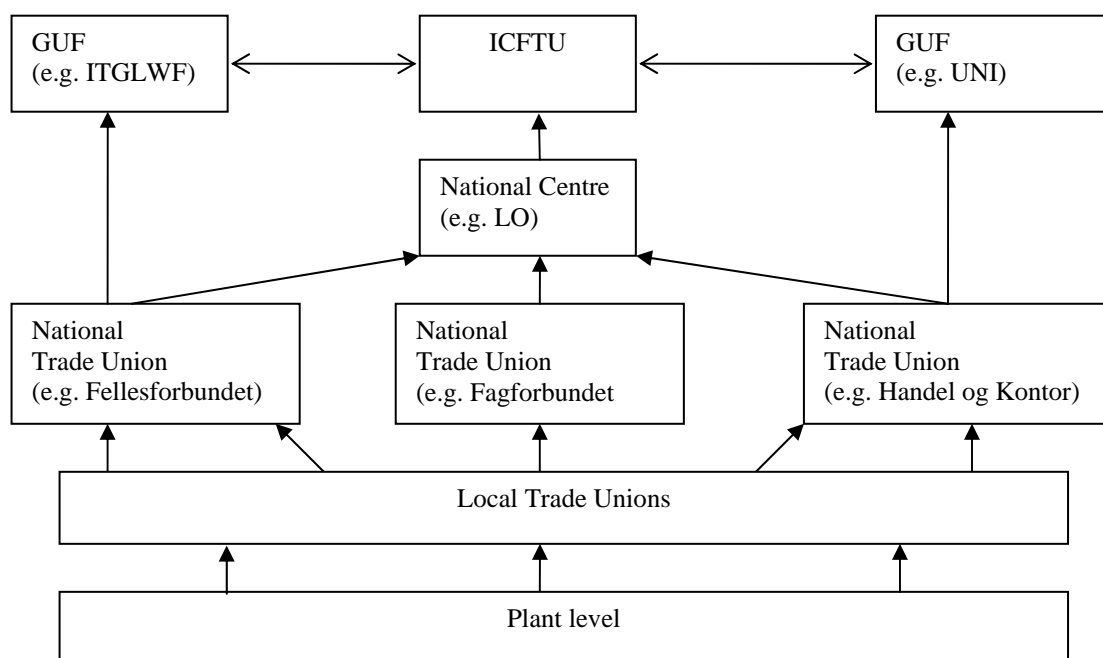


Figure 1: Trade union affiliations

The ITGLWF has 216 affiliated organizations from 106 countries North and South, and their membership amounts to more than 10 million workers². The stated goals of the organization are among others to provide guidelines, coordinate activities, make contributions to actions of solidarity, provide education and aid to the affiliated trade unions from underdeveloped countries and to lobby relevant organizations and institutions. The ITGLWF has also got autonomous regional offices for Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. As seen in the figure, there is also a close relationship between the GUFs and the ICFTU, and all the GUFs and the ICFTU partake in an initiative called Global Unions.

The textile and garment industries

According to Dicken (2003) these industries were the first to take on a global dimension among the manufacturing industries. A new international division of labour in the textile and garment industries was recognized by Fröbel et al. (1980) already in the early eighties. They are now regarded the most geographically dispersed of all industries across both developed and developing countries, with 160 countries producing mainly for markets in 30 countries (Dicken 2003, Kearney 2004). Despite the relocation and geographical dispersal, however, the textile and garment industries remain important sources of employment in the developed economies. Much of the

² <http://www.itglwf.org/> Printed 20.04.2005

geographical spread can be attributed to the quota system introduced in the GATT negotiations most commonly referred to as the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). Although the correct term for the latest agreement is the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), I will refer to it as MFA since that is what my informants used. The contemporary spatial division of labour in these industries is, in other words, a product of a combination of cheap labour power and access to quotas, and not necessarily a set of comparative advantages since regulations distort the so-called optimal allocation of production. However, on the 1st of January 2005 the quotas were eliminated and the industries left unregulated, probably giving rise to a different spatial division of labour since factors such as technology, quality, skill, lead time and backward linkages enter the equation. The MFA was supposed to be phased out, but the ending is more abrupt than gradual. Time will tell the impact, but as the industries are mainly concentrated in the poorer countries, the picture painted is bleak, although the phase out might be a pretext for increasing the role of global unions:

Clearly with the phase out of the MFA and this global competition, it's going to potentially put one country in competition with another for their share of the market. So that's why we think it's very important to have an international approach, so that we can try to ensure it doesn't happen, or when it does happen the effects are minimized.

ITGLWF Official

The industries being dominated by large transnational corporations owning no production, being either brand names or retailers, the shift of production does not entail any disinvestments or investments and can be conducted by a phone call placing orders wherever, or, to all appearances, in China. The textile and garment industries are characterized by complex supply relationships existing between different types of transnational corporations (ITGLWF 2002). Downstream there are textiles transnationals specializing in the manufacture of raw materials, supplying products to the garment industry composed of manufacturers. The textiles part of the supply chain is dominated by companies wholly or partly owning their production facilities often located in low cost areas, and the tendency is towards increased use of outsourcing, often extending all the way to homeworkers. There has been more focus on transnationals operating upstream, where the merchandisers owning no production operate. A large amount of money is put into design and branding, and this is often regarded as the soft underbelly of the 'new economy' (Klein 2000). Trade unions wield a strong weapon with their ability to taint the images worth millions of dollars by drawing appalling working conditions to the consumers' attention.

China mopping up the textile and garment industries?

Even before China became a member of the WTO her exports of textiles and garments were growing rapidly (Lardy 2002). By 1995 China had as much as 41% of the world total employment in textiles, while the percentage for clothing and footwear were 20 (ILO 2000). At the time of accession China was therefore already the world's largest producer and exporter of textiles and garments products. Still, China was held to be considerably curtailed by the MFA, and is therefore expected to significantly increase its share of the world market, especially in garments. Despite the restrictions, between 1980 and 1998 China's textile exports rose from \$2.54 billion to \$12.81

billion, while garment exports soared from \$1.48 billion to \$27.1 billion (Lardy 2002). In addition, the fact that China filled the quotas by 95 to 100 percent indicates that they were a strong shackle on her exports. A significant share of both garment and textile exports are produced under processing contracts with foreign firms, and many of them, having gained a foothold, are just waiting to shift additional production as the quotas fall. This was the case with for instance the Malaysian transnational Ramatex, which opened a plant in Namibia in 2002 with the sole aim to exploit the quotas until they could expand their activities in China in 2005 (Jauch 2005), an example I will return to in the epilogue.

An outline of the contents

In order to answer my research questions, I will, after discussing my methodology, delve into the question of geographical scales and strategies for systemic change in the third chapter. Why is there a call for internationalism? What changes in the world economy have precipitated the loss of faith in a national approach and led many scholars to focus on the need for a worldwide alliance or movement of the multitude of oppressed and dispossessed? To what extent nationality is still a primary identity among people is also discussed. The fourth chapter examines the grounds for uniting workers as a class through an analysis of the impacts of the new regime of accumulation on their harmony of interests and solidarity. First, however, an explication of what is meant by class is provided, before problematizing the transformation into a class *for itself* through building subjective class consciousness. What barriers exist to working class unity and solidarity? A discussion of the concept of solidarity is also provided by examining different approaches to it both in theory and in history. The following chapter examines the *raison d'être* and the liabilities of the main organization of the working class; the trade union. A main focus is the trade unions' potential role in instigating systemic change. The last chapter before my conclusion puts the insights of the former chapters together and examines global unions as a potential social force. The sixth chapter hence provides a concluding summary of the framework established and employs it as a backdrop against which global unions are analysed. Finally, the conclusion answers the research question at a higher abstraction level by briefly summarizing my findings and discussing the transferability of my analysis.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the objective and research questions of this thesis, I have chosen a qualitative methodological approach grounded in the philosophy of critical realism. Exploring solidarity, as a human sentiment *and* a strategy, necessitates in-depth firsthand information of the relevant agents' experiences and strategies. In this chapter, I will first of all reflect upon my personal biases by drawing on the insight of the critical research tradition, before moving on to give a brief introduction to the ontological and epistemological ideas informing my analysis. This is followed by some comments on the choice of case and informants, and a presentation of various aspects of the data collection process and the subsequent analysis and write-up of my findings. I will conclude by reflecting on the validity and reliability of my research.

Critical research

The critical research tradition drives attention to the political dimension of social science, and a basic assumption is that research can not treat social phenomena in a neutral and objective way. Braverman (1974) has for instance claimed that there is a tendency to identify the interests of 'civilization' not with its major component, workers, but with those who hire and manage them. Manicas (1998) also argues that modern social sciences often defend the status quo, explaining this with the failure to acknowledge that despite social reality being real enough, it is not fixed and unchanging but remoulded by human activities. Hence, since people are causal agents capable of refashioning society, scholars should help them realize the power vested in them. Taking emancipation as a point of departure, the role played by social scientists, consciously or unconsciously, in catering for or disregarding certain interests is recognized, and an attempt is instead made to invert the focus (Alvesson and Sköldberg 1994). In this thesis the mainstream corporate perspective in human geography on location, innovation, profits and economic development is substituted by a labour perspective. How do the economic strategies of capital impact upon labour, and most importantly, how does labour respond to capital's offensive? Alvesson and Sköldberg contend that critical social theory is characterized by a fundamental scepticism towards any notion of neutral or objective social science. This is not a far cry from the epistemological nihilism of late, in which truth is rendered an illusion (Manicas 1998). I do not adopt such a standpoint, and will rather refer to Popper's (1963) concept of *verisimilitude* implying that the truth content of theories is a relative matter. This also dovetails with Sayer's (1998:122, emphasis in original) contention that: "it does not follow from the fact that all knowledge is fallible, that it is all *equally* fallible".

Critical realism and Marxism

The importance of philosophy in our understanding of social phenomena can be seen in the debate on two central concepts in this thesis; globalization and class. Much of the disagreement as to whether globalization actually exists can be traced to different epistemological positions regarding

theoretical versus empirical substantiation of propositions (Knutsen 1998). In this case, sceptics such as Hirst and Thompson (1999) emphasize empirically observable trends, and not the abstract tendencies which are the main focus of the transformationalists, such as Giddens (1990). The latter perspective bears close resemblance to the ontology of critical realism, which will be my point of departure, and I have chosen to view globalization as a tendency towards an increasingly global capitalist structure.

The ontology of critical realism

The ontology of critical realism involves a distinction between three levels of reality; the real, the actual and the empirical (Stokke 1993, Bhaskar 1998a). Bhaskar (1998a) argues that causal structures and generative mechanisms are structured and intransitive, which means that they are relatively independent of patterns of events and the actions of people. In a similar vein, he maintains that events must occur independently of our experiences of them. Structures exist at the level of the real, and they have certain internal, necessary relations which determine their properties. A structure will on the basis of this have certain liabilities, and through mechanisms generate observable events at the level of the actual, although the structures are distinct from the events they generate. Events are in turn experienced by actors at the level of the empirical, although they are distinct from these experiences in which they are apprehended. This is counterpoised to empiricism which, according to Bhaskar presupposes a closed system, that is, a system characterized by the internal structure of mechanisms and their external conditions being constant, such as in an experiment (Sayer 1985). The social world is, on the other hand, an open system due to the human ability to learn and act under new circumstances. In open systems the constancy does not apply, and hence the nomothetic method is regarded inappropriate in social sciences. Regularities must consequently be analysed as powers or tendencies of the underlying generative mechanisms, and not as laws. Thus, in open systems the operating mechanisms are subject to modifications, strengthening and/or neutralization, and at the same time, the social situation might change with the implication that other mechanisms or liabilities may make themselves evident (Stokke 1993). This is not to say that empirical observations of concrete reality are not necessary for theorizing about mechanisms and necessary relations, what it means is that even though the level of the real is related to the empirical, the two are not in complete accordance with each other. External relations will determine whether a mechanism is realized or not at the level of the empirical. In other words, external factors determine whether a mechanism is realized or not, rendering the relation between the object and the realization of its properties contingent or arbitrary (Sayer 1985, Stokke 1993). This contingency makes deduction of a concrete reality from inherent laws, themselves derived from abstract concepts, next to impossible (Lipietz 1986).

The social world is, in addition to an open system, also always pre-structured (Bhaskar 1998b). What is meant by this is that agents are always acting in a world of structural constraints and possibilities which they did not themselves produce. Social structures are both the ever-present condition for and the continually reproduced outcome of intentional or unintentional human agency. A given structural change will also impact upon the range of possible future scenarios, and

the past is undetermined in the sense that what happened was one possible outcome out of several options. Returning to the issue of globalization, I regard capitalism as a structure with a liability to expand globally. Since I do not regard globalization as a structure or a condition, I have chosen to employ the term global capitalism, as it incorporates both the structure and its current global character, and 'globalization' when referring to the *process*. This does, however, not imply that capitalism is the only mode of production in existence, nor that it is globalized in the sense of equalization and erasure of uneven geographical development. I will thus like Castree et al. (2004) regard capitalism as global in the sense that it is the predominant mode of production worldwide thus impacting upon the majority of people's lives.

Applying critical realism to regulation theory, which is an underlying theory informing my thesis, involves that the analysis might start with the tendential laws of capital accumulation without viewing the emergence of a new regime of accumulation as inscribed in the destiny of capitalism, even though it corresponds to certain observable tendencies (Jessop 1990). Lipietz (1986) proposes an *a posteriori* functionalism, where the existence of a social articulation can be explained by referring to its capacity to reproduce the system; a capacity which only came to the fore after the contingent articulation took place. Regulation is therefore not a specific site or object of regulation, but it is a process and a result (Harvey 1982, Jessop 1990). Concepts are used to identify general aspects in concrete situations, and this is what I intend to do when working on my case.

Marxism and the class concept

I will mainly employ different insights from Marxism in this thesis since the tradition offers extensive knowledge and have high explanatory power on the field of labour and trade unions. It is not uncommon to anchor this tradition in the critical realist ontology. This involves considering the capitalist world economy as a structure with certain internal, necessary relations, such as the division of labour, a determinate type of ownership of production and a determinate form of appropriation of economic surplus, which determine its properties (Laclau 1971). These relations can be regarded necessary as they are part of the defining criteria of capitalism. That is, capitalism as an abstraction isolates the necessary relationships, while any concrete social formation is a contingent combination of several necessary relationships and thus only determinable through empirical research (Harvey 1999). This is also the case for the much-debated class concept. The inadequacy of the concept is often substantiated by reference to an understanding of other identities, such as gender and ethnicity, as constituting social dynamics in their own right through for instance social movements. Other objections are the essentialism and reductionism involved (Smith 2000). Smith tries to restore the class concept and upholds that just at the time when most academics have theorized themselves away from class, global capitalism has produced an unprecedented formation and restructuring of class. However, what needs to be borne in mind is that class was never thought of as a personal identity. Class, as conceived by Marx, was an abstraction of the social relations arising from the process of production, and is defined by the relation to the means of production. The concept is in other words not a generalization of characteristics inferred from the concrete world, but an abstraction of a necessary relation. Hence, this does not negate the fact that in any concrete society

the individual members of the working class are highly diverse, but it implies that what unites them is their common relationship to capital. The concept working class thus encompasses among others women, homosexuals and blacks. The concrete, being a combination of many diverse forces or processes will not map neatly onto the abstract, the defining criteria of which is that it is a one-sided aspect of the object under concern (Sayer 1998). Furthermore, the diverse determinations pertaining to the concrete are not simply 'added up', they synthesize, meaning that their combination modifies the individual elements. Thus, the diversity of the working class should not be downplayed, as it impacts on the unity and agency of the class, and Smith (2000) maintains that due to the situations of the real world being highly complex, the issue of power and resistance never adhere neatly to any social category. The class relation between capital and wage workers is, according to Sayer, an abstraction of a necessary and internal relation to capitalism. He substantiates the claim by pointing out that although it might be possible for a capitalist to stop purchasing labour-power, this would render him or her a non-capitalist. Consequently, Sayer argues that given the fact that each part of the relation depends on the other for its existence, any abstraction which treat them as independent is a 'chaotic conception'. The only way to refute the existence of the working class is hence to prove that a capitalist enterprise could function in its present form with for instance serf or slave labour. On the other hand, whether the workers employed are of different nationalities, ethnicities or genders is a contingent matter. The attribution of certain characteristics to the working class, such as blue-collar white male workers, is hence delusional. Regarding the gender issue, this thesis could quite as well deal with the gender inequality of trade unions. I have, however, chosen to focus on the dynamics of proletarian solidarity and international organization. The point made by Eisenstein (ref. Smith 2000:1015) that "class exploitation seems to be back with a vengeance, and women and girls – especially in the third-world-south countries – appears to take the brunt of it" applies to a large extent in the textile and garment industries. However, in light of the objective of this thesis, I will unfortunately not deal with gender inequalities, as I will rather take the emancipation of the entire working class as my point of departure. I therefore agree with Smith (2000) that oppression on the basis of race and gender is enveloped by the economic exploitation rooted in class difference and that the dismantling of the former requires the abolishment of the latter. Transcending capitalism is often associated with the working class, being as mentioned comprised by oppressed ethnicities, races and women, since workers, despite their economic exploitation, retain their social and political power acquired through the threat of a collective refusal of work (Smith 2000, Callinicos 2003). Furthermore, since the other social categories contain both workers and capitalists, the working class is the only social group for which the overthrow of capitalism is a collective good (Smith 2000).

According to Smith (2000) and Radice (2001) one of the most striking failures of Marxist geography and socialist analyses of capitalism regards the treatment of the agency of the working class, regarding workers as mainly passive victims. However, some contemporary scholars, among them Herod (1995, 1997, 2001, 2002), have attempted to straighten this up. Herod (1995) claims that there is a need to reconceptualize the way workers and their trade unions are theorized as agents, hence arguing that while empirical work in the area of trade unions is important, it is not

sufficient to address labour's problematic status in contemporary geographical theory. Herod therefore suggests a need to more fully incorporate workers as active geographical agents in accounts of the operation of the global economy and the geography of capitalism.

Global capitalism is in other words held to be the overarching structure, with the internal and necessary relation between classes. Within this structure workers form trade unions in order to exert their agency. The trade unions are regarded as sub-structures in their own right with certain liabilities arising from their properties. They are hence subject to the mechanisms of capitalism, while having mechanisms of their own.

Analysis and mode of inference

Theory makes its strongest claims about the level of the real, that is, abstracting necessary relations, and identifying mechanisms and properties of structures, while the certainty is circumscribed when it comes to statements concerning contingent relations occurring in concrete situations (Sayer 1998). The latter thus requires empirical analysis. In addition, theory is always continually revisable both due to the replacement or amendment of old theories and because the social reality is changing (Manicas 1998). Empirical investigation is hence called for both when it comes to avoiding the reductionism resulting from a failure to acknowledge the contingent relations between the abstract and the concrete, and the need to revise theory as society undergoes transformations. In light of this, the mode of inference employed in this thesis is abduction. Abductive reasoning is often argued to be halfway between the polar opposites of induction and deduction (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). Recognizing the problem of induction pointed out by Hume, and consequently the danger of reductionism when searching for regularities without due attention to contingency, and the difficulty of new thinking involved in the falsificationism of the hypothetico-deductive approach, abduction offers a more dynamic interaction between data and theory. Furthermore, abduction helps the researcher to infer from the specific case toward a more generic level. The transferability of my findings will be dealt with in the discussion of case studies.

Due to the objective of this thesis being partly to analyze and scrutinize theory, and agreeing with Coffey and Atkinson (1996) in that theorizing is integral to analysis, I have chosen not to separate them neither in time nor in the write-up, and hence adopted a more dialogic relationship between the two. Similarly, I used theory to inform the coding of interviews and documents. To Coffey and Atkinson using theory implies the researcher integrating his/her ideas with the analysis of data aiming at the generation of new ideas but also drawing on existing theories. The research process involved first a large amount of reading before conducting the first field trip after which I narrowed down my focus followed by more reading. As recognized by Coffey and Atkinson, generating analytical ideas from data alone is difficult, although they also point out that no amount of reading can provide the researcher with standard ideas fit for all situations. What is important is hence to develop the understanding through a constant movement between data and theory, that is, there should be a constant interplay between scrutinizing theories and the content of the data. Furthermore, writing is, according to them, more than reporting findings, it is to a larger extent than any other aspect of research concerned with making explicit and systematic use of theory.

Abduction may in addition strengthen the construct validity as it helps tailor the research questions to the analytical framework being developed in the intersection between theories and the images arising out of my data.

Case studies

In order to shed light on the issue of global trade unionism, I have chosen to opt for a disciplined-configurative case study (Eckstein in Mitchell 2000). This involves an attempt to interpret findings in light of general theory, thus running from theory to case interpretation. However, as written above, the movement is both ways thus aiming at revising, supplementing or replacing old theories with new insights. Where this aim becomes most clear is in my intention to revise Galtung's (1974) theory of imperialism. Case studies are often criticized for making generalizations impossible, mainly due to the question of the representativity of a selected case. Against this it can be claimed that case studies involve another kind of generalization; not empirical, but analytic (Hammersley et al. 2000). Mitchell (2000) is of the opinion that the inference is not empirical, but logical. Using case studies under a critical realist ontological framework is a superior method of investigating to extensive approaches since the task at hand is gaining insight into necessary and causal mechanisms. As opposed to the abstraction by generalization taking place in quantitative approaches, in qualitative case studies it is common to generalize by abstracting. Moreover, the purpose is not to develop an independent theory through thorough analysis of a single case, but to examine a case selected in order to explicate formerly obscure aspects of a general theory. The intention is to specify the necessary relations between a set of theoretically significant elements empirically manifested in the concrete. In practice, however, any one set of data is likely to manifest only some of the elements whose explication would be necessary for a cogent theoretical interpretation of the processes involved (Mitchell 2000). According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) transcending the specific should not aim at a single 'correct' generalization, but should rather ensure that the analysis is methodologically convincing.

I chose the ITGLWF as my case due to the global character of the industries in which it is operating. The textile industry was at the background for the introduction of the term New International Division of Labour by Fröbel et al. already at the start of the 1980s. In order to revise Galtung's (1974) theory of imperialism, it was important to choose an industry existing both in the South and in the North. Moreover, the phasing out of the MFA gave me a useful lens through which to see the processes of competition and cooperation among national trade unions. Last but not least, the fact that my supervisor had personal contact with one of the officials in the ITGLWF gained me a foothold more easily than if I would have to make contacts myself.

Methods for data collection and sources of information

The method for collection of data I found most appropriate given my research questions was semi-structured qualitative interviews, supplied by analysis of documents and some observational participation. By observational participation I mean participating only by observing, that is, my participation at the World Congress was not on an equal footing with the trade union delegates.

The approach hence came close to the ideal type ‘observer-as-participant’ recognized by Eyles (1988) in which the researcher assumes a distinctive role as against the researched, and does not try to conceal the ‘outsider’ status.

In addition to having a theoretical point of departure, I also wanted to write a thesis of relevance to the field. Therefore I decided to go on a first exploratory field trip to an ITGLWF office in Newcastle where I conducted four interviews, one with an associate professor at Northumbria University tied to the ITGLWF and three with two officials, one being a follow-up interview. The questions asked dealt with important topics in global trade unionism generally and for the ITGLWF particularly. I also asked what they thought was important topics for research. Luckily, I learned from my trip to Newcastle that the ITGLWF’s World Congress was scheduled to take place that same year. Between the two field trips I narrowed my scope and decided upon what I should focus my attention on theoretically and in subsequent interviews. In October I went to Istanbul for the 9th World Congress both for interviews and observation. In addition to interviews, I also received several reports, the ITGLWF’s agenda for action and the rules of the organization. I have regularly checked the ITGLWF’s website (www.itglwf.org) for news and press releases. A large part of my data has also come from secondary literature.

Interviews

Taking Rubin and Rubin’s (1995) two models of conducting interviews as a point of departure, the interviews conducted during my first fieldtrip can be characterized as ‘river-and-channel’. The interview is likened to a major river merging different currents and breaking up into separate channels possibly combining again at some later point. According to Rubin and Rubin this model is particularly apt for exploration and when the researcher does not have extensive knowledge beforehand, as the approach allows for many diversions to the main topic popping up in the course of the interview. I tried to actively solicit a wide variety of ideas and attempted not to limit how interviewees responded to my concerns. For the interviews conducted during my second fieldtrip, the metaphor of a ‘tree-and-branch’ is more appropriate. The core topic forms the trunk, while the main questions of the interview are the branches with some follow-up questions stretching out. This model is, according to Rubin and Rubin, most appropriate when the researcher know in advance what needs to be covered.

All in all, I conducted 11 interviews, four of them in Newcastle, six in Istanbul and one per e-mail. In two cases I interviewed more than one informant at a time, in both cases because the selected informant did not feel sufficiently fluid in English. In both cases, however, it proved very fruitful as the discussion among the two interviewees gave me both insights into contested issues but also additional insights. All the interviews except one was digitally recorded using an MP3 voice recorder after asking for the informant’s consent. Being aware that recording might scare the informant from speaking vividly, I did not sense any nervousness or many restraints on the topics covered. One informant even remarked that the smallness of the device made him feel more comfortable than with a highly visible microphone. However, the same informant also regretted one or two utterances which he asked me not to quote him on. In order to ease his anxiety I have

promised to send him a draft of the thesis before submitting. The interviews were transcribed *in vivo*, that is, I transcribed the interviews in their entirety word by word, also including hesitation, irony and laughter so that I would not misinterpret them when reading through them later on. I also jotted down notes during and straight after interviews and kept diaries of feelings and impressions. Although transcriptions are easy to handle as a source of data, the process of first recording and then transcribing deprives the source first of body language and then of intonation. Having some written material on my impressions might thus to a larger extent reconstruct the interview situation. At the Congress I also had the opportunity to ‘mingle’ during breaks talking to delegates informally writing down interesting remarks. These were both from the selected countries but also from countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia, Nepal, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Sweden and Norway. The language barrier was, however, bigger than I had expected, and some of the delegates I addressed did not understand one word of what I was saying. Despite only, with one exception, interviewing delegates speaking English, the mastering of the language varied a great deal. This was reflected in the duration of the interviews, varying from on the short side of 15 minutes to 2 hours. The shortest interviews also being the ones with poorest English is not quoted directly in this thesis, and in cases where I am not sure whether the informant understood my question I have not attached much significance to it. The delegates from the Dominican Republic did not speak English, but one of them understood enough to translate the questions in my interview guide to Spanish. This interview is hence following the guide slavishly and there was no room for probing as my Spanish vocabulary is limited to ‘gracias’. Both delegates answered in Spanish and the only way to figure out what they were telling me was through recording the interview and getting help from a Spanish speaking student back home in Oslo. For the task I chose an exchange student from Uruguay as he was familiar with the accent. He listened to the recording and transcribed in Spanish. I told him to translate as directly as possible.

The role of the interview guide varied in the different interviews but in most cases it functioned more as a checklist as the interview drew to a close. By assigning it this function the researcher is more flexible and it is easier to follow up interesting comments as they pop up during the interview by probing. The topics to be covered were in other words decided on beforehand, but the order was random as I followed the stories of the informant. This gave me some flexibility to adjust the questions to the informant’s dispositions. In addition, there were possibilities for the informants to bring up topics not included in the interview guide. However, due to the hectic schedule at the Congress I used it more actively when I knew that time was short in order to ensure that most of the topics were covered. In all cases I did my best to prevent the interviews from sliding into discussions or asking leading questions in order to get the informants to give me the answers I was looking for. This is particularly important when dealing with a politicized field in which it is easy to get the ‘politically correct’ answers. I therefore deliberately omitted the word ‘solidarity’ in the interview guides, and I refrained from using it myself during the interviews (the interview guides are provided in Appendix 2). Instead I decided, in accordance with the advice given by Thagaard (1998), to use the MFA phase out as a concrete happening through which the issue of solidarity could be seen. For the same reason I also tried to interrupt only for clarification,

probing and elaboration. As recognized by Kvale (1997), interviewing is hence no objective process as new ideas arise during the interview and both of the parties influence each other. The informants were very knowledgeable especially when it came to trade unions and the ITGLWF, but some even had extensive insights into theory. Several of the interviews were interviews in the direct sense of the term, and the delegates from India thanked me for having ‘taught them a lot’ through asking them ‘the important questions’.

Informants

After choosing the MFA phase out as the lens through which global solidarity should be seen, I decided to interview delegates from countries predicted to be heavily impacted, either positively or negatively. In other words, I aspired to select informants telling different stories about the same topic, and accordingly, striving for a certain degree of heterogeneity among the informants. Hence, at the Congress I interviewed delegates from national trade unions from Bangladesh, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, India and the Dominican Republic. Apart from delegates I also wanted to gain some knowledge from those who had more a bird’s-eye view of the situation. Since I interviewed two officials in Newcastle, I decided to interview the General Secretary of the ITGLWF in Istanbul. I used the same interview guide for all the delegates, but as mentioned above, following the dynamic of the interview I did not ask all the delegates the same questions and not in the same order.

The informants in Newcastle were selected when the case was selected. One of them was a personal acquaintance of my supervisor, and the other had worked in the ITGLWF for a long time and they were by and large the staff working from Newcastle. As regards the Congress, I wanted to contact the interviewees in advance and had to ask one of the officials for information as to who was coming from the countries selected. He thus provided me with a list over delegates he thought was good enough in English to be interviewed. Although there was a danger of him influencing what kind of persons I ended up talking to, I saw at the Congress that there were actually not that many options. From some of the countries selected there was only one delegate, while from others there was only one speaking English. I did not get any replies from the selected interviewees, and the selection thus initially felt rather random going through the auditorium addressing all the delegates from the selected countries. However, some gave themselves out as they were the only representatives from their country, or the only ones understanding my request. Thus, in the end I ended up interviewing all the persons the official recommended except two who were not present. I interviewed one of those not present per e-mail just to see if he could supplement what the Congress delegate told me. I ended every interview by asking the informants if I could quote them and if they wanted me to leave their names out. All of them permitted me both to quote them and use their names. I have, however, decided not to use names in the text out of consideration to the reader. Instead of naming the informants I will refer to either their nationality or their position, and provide a list of their names and positions in Appendix 1.

Other sources of data

Apart from the extensive use of theory and secondary literature, other sources of data have been observational participation and analysis of documents. According to Yin (1994) one merit of case studies is the possibility of having multiple types of information sources, and the inclusion of different kinds of data sources answering the same questions might enhance the construct validity of the study.

First of all, attending the Congress involved observational participation, and the experiences gathered through listening to the discussions taking place gave me an opportunity to identify some of the most important topics in the ITGLWF, and to see for myself around what issues controversies arose. However, my main impression was that there were few controversies except from the critique offered by the Sri Lankan delegate. When I asked the Norwegian delegate about the matter, he told me that although the situation to some extent mirrored the actual organizational climate, some of the hottest discussions had taken place prior to the Congress so as to keep the timetable. What I observed is not explicitly referred to in the text, but it has acted as an important guidance and been pivotal in shaping my understanding of the ITGLWF. Having participated and seen the dynamics of the organization myself also increases my confidence regarding the conclusions reached. Participation can be problematized especially when it comes to the researcher distorting the 'natural' unfolding of events. I feel confident, however, that my presence did not alter the course of events as it to a large extent went unheeded. Among about 330 delegates only about 20 knew that I was a so-called 'outsider'. The Congress proceedings of interest were recorded with the MP3 voice recorder and transcribed in the same manner as the interviews. These I have chosen to treat as written material, since most of them were well-planned beforehand, and a list of them is provided in Appendix 3. In addition all the participants were provided with a package of ITGLWF material, among them a summary of the proceedings at the 8th World Congress. These documents proved very useful both when it came to understanding the outlook of the ITGLWF and getting a longer time perspective. Some of the delegates and officials I interviewed are for instance quoted in the summary proceedings of the 8th Congress, helping me to consolidate my impression of them. In order to get a more general picture of global trade unionism, I have also paid active attention to diverse media, such as news at www.labourstart.org, Norwegian newspapers and even documentaries and movies dealing with the issue. Both the documents and the other sources became more interesting towards the end as I to a greater extent knew what to look for, and in addition had met some of the persons referred to. These other sources thus supplemented the data I collected and they were to some extent used for cross examination striving to develop what Yin (1994) terms converging lines of inquiry. According to Yin (1994:92) the conclusions reached are more convincing and accurate if "it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode".

Validity and reliability

I will sum up this methodology chapter by reflecting on the validity and reliability of this study. For this purpose I will employ Yin's (1994) differentiation of validity into construct, internal and

external. The construct validity concerns whether the researcher is actually investigating what he/she means to investigate, and has already been touched upon. One way to increase this validity is to ask the relevant people the relevant questions, another to use several data sources. Above I also argued that abduction increases the construct validity as the dialogical relationship between data and theory helps check the relation between the research questions and what is actually investigated. Internal validity, on the other hand, is linked to credibility and deals with the possibility to judge the plausibility of the inferences. I have sought to render my inferences and methods visible, thus leaving the judgement to the reader. When it comes to external validity which concerns the transferability of the findings, the character of the study must be taken into consideration. Through being a disciplined-configurative case study, data is analyzed in light of theory. My ambition is in turn to challenge and/or supplement these theories by modifications and through new insights. Transferability is hence part of my objective, although some findings may be particular to the textile and garment industries, especially those concerning high capital mobility. The external validity hence depends on exactly what is being transferred or extrapolated. I will deal with the issue of transferability at greater length in the conclusion.

Turning to the issue of reliability issues such as the ‘replicability’ of the findings and the possibility of checking the sources are important. Yin (1994) suggests to build a data base of the research material so that others have access to it. I have in accordance with his advice saved all the audio files containing the interviews, and stored the documents and articles referred to. Another way of increasing the reliability is by using verbatim quotes, which I have done to a great extent. However, the use of verbatim quotes is not unproblematic as they are excerpted from their original context and recontextualized in *my* narrative. In addition, as mentioned above, through transcription the interview situation is reduced to written words. Due to the language barriers, I have also been careful not to quote ambiguous statements. Perhaps most importantly, due to the fact that English was not the mother tongue of most of my informants I have tried to avoid stigmatizing them through quoting them verbatim when that might compromise their integrity or the argument made. I have hence, as recommended by Kvale (1997) and Butler (2001), taken the liberty of correcting grammatical errors, leaving out repetitions of the same word and sentences which at a later point are rephrased. According to Kvale (1997) being considerate towards informants are part of the ethics of doing research. However, in order not to distort or change the meaning of the utterance or put words into the informants’ mouth I have abstained from substituting words or make ambiguous statements less so. If an utterance required reworking in order to be understandable in another context, I have not quoted it.

According to Thagaard (1998), reliability, or ‘trustworthiness’ as she terms it, is a matter of the researcher reflecting over the context in which the data was collected, and I think the setting of World Congress requires some comments. Although the prospect of a deregulated industry probably forced many a trade unionist to think globally, being at a World Congress renders global questions a main preoccupation for several days. The informants may thus have been both influenced by the speeches made, but also more concerned with these questions than they usually are. However, the informant I interviewed per e-mail gave me much the same answers as the

informants in Istanbul had given me, signalling that these sentiments also exist independently of the context of a world congress. Regarding context, it is also important to pay heed to my interaction with the informants as interviews are inter-subjective situations. There is always a risk of obtaining what informants want me to hear or what they think I want to hear. As already mentioned, I avoided using concepts with normative connotations, and when I presented my work I laid bare the concrete aspect of it, that is, I told the informants I was doing a Master thesis on the prospects and challenges of international trade unionism especially focussing on the strategies concerning the MFA phase out. The issue of objectivity is hence highly problematical in qualitative interviewing as it is mediated by perception and context, although there are certain measures to adopt in order to ensure some degree of detachment. For instance, by trying to avoid letting personal opinions and values dominate the interviews and keeping an open mind towards the informant might forestall that informants reply only what they think the researcher wants to hear. However, as Thagaard (1998) points out, there is no panacea to this problem, and it is important for the researcher to consider the possibility of informants being influenced by the researcher's appearance. Another way of minimizing the influence upon informants is, according to Rubin and Rubin (1995), to be aware of specialized vocabulary and assumptions. As already mentioned I abstained from using the word solidarity until the informants had brought it up themselves, as well as the Marxist concepts capital and labour, as I wanted to hear the informants' interpretations without blocking that communication by putting my own assumptions in the way. To me it seemed as if most of my informants treated me on an equal footing, some even as a trade unionist, but in one or two cases I felt like a young girl being 'taught'. This made the first part of the interview very basic, which turned out quite interesting as it revealed some of their interpretations of matters I had only read in theoretical literature. Moreover, my personal assumptions and biases were left in the background as it seemed that the informants assumed that I had none.

Finally, I will give some comments on the role of the researcher in the write-up. When writing a thesis about a topic, my interpretations form the backbone of the study. The researcher, being in most cases the author, have the power to sort out and balance what different people say, especially if there are contending interpretations of the same events (Rubin and Rubin 1995). In my case, however, the contending interpretations are interesting in their own right and I have aspired to render them as visible as possible. But, a lot of information has to be discarded due to falling outside the purview of my research questions. As a researcher I have thus created my own narrative based on these questions and the subsequent analysis. However, the statements referred to did arise in the interviews leaving the information grounded in the informants' stories, although the narrative is the representation of the topic as heard and interpreted by me.

INTERNATIONALISM

Concepts

In contemporary times, the concept of globalization has for some time occupied centre stage in both scientific and popular debates. However, the concept is highly controversial, and Castree et al. (2004) identifies at least three different positions; ‘hyperglobalists’ (such as Ohmae and Hardt and Negri), ‘sceptics’ (among others Hirst and Thompson) and ‘transformationalists’ (for instance Giddens). The main debate is whether today’s world economy is qualitatively different from preceding eras, with Ohmae (2001) and Hardt and Negri (2000) heralding the death of the nation-state, Hirst and Thompson (1999) arguing that the current era is only quantitatively different from the internationalism of pre-WWI, and Giddens (1990) differentiating between tendencies and abrupt changes. The debate regarding the actual existence of globalization has now reached something of an impasse which is why I will, as already mentioned, employ the term ‘global capitalism’ when referring to the structure, but without paraphrasing theorists using ‘globalization’. Even though this might seem an easy way out, the term encompasses what is of importance; few question the fact that we live in a predominantly capitalist world and that capitalism has certain properties.

Another conceptual subtlety is the distinction between international and global, and although it might sound like a fine point, the distinction might be worth making, especially when it comes to strategic alliances. What is the important reference point in the alliance; the national identity of the participants as in ‘inter-national’, or some other identity transcending the nation-state as in ‘global’? The sense of a transition can be seen in the following quote from a delegate I interviewed at the ITGLWF’s World Congress:

[I]n the time of Marx and Engels, it was called the international working class, now we can talk of a global working class.

Delegate from Sri Lanka

In much of what follows I will use the terms interchangeably depending on what sources I refer to. Since globalization is regarded a relatively new phenomenon, it is not very often found in the literature before the 1990s. Thus, when I refer to a text written using the concept ‘international’, I will not exchange it for ‘global’. This also goes for the designation of the organizations concerned. They were formerly called International Trade Secretaries, but changed their name in 2002 to Global Union Federations (GUFs). I will use the abbreviation ITSs when referring to their past and GUFs when referring to the last couple of years and my analysis of them. The main reason for doing this is that, according to an official I interviewed in the ITGLWF, the change of names signals a repositioning of the former ITSs:

I think it's an important [...] repositioning of the old international trade secretariats, because what the hell does that mean? It could be anything, couldn't it? It could be an arm of the World Bank! In terms of the name. So, I think they suddenly woke up 50 years later and decided why [...] don't we call ourselves global unions? That's what we are! Global unions bringing together all the unions that have members in our sector.

While the official focussed on the ambiguous connotations of the term 'trade secretariat', one of the delegates I interviewed at the Congress placed more emphasis on the choice of global as opposed to international:

[T]hey want to bring out the fact that they are globally organized, and I think you should be able to grasp the difference between what is international and what is global. International is extension from nation to nation. But global really integrates and breaks through national structures.

Delegate from Sri Lanka

Another interesting aspect of the choice of terminology at the Congress was a complete substitution for the word international with global, even when the speakers talked about long standing concepts like international solidarity.

A brief history of workers' internationalism

As mentioned introductorily the labour movement was from its very inception almost instinctively internationalist (Munck 2002). The first attempt at organizing internationally was through the International Working Men's Association, also called the First International, in 1864; an organization joining trade unions and political organizations. Its origins can be traced to an economic crisis generating a general strike movement in the UK. During these strikes, the employers made explicit reference to foreign competition and threatened to import cheaper foreign labour. Olle and Schoeller (1977) thus maintains that propagandising internationalism was a matter of life or death for the English workers. However, the role of Marx himself in the foundation of the First International is not to be neglected, and according to Munck (2002) Marx was personally responsible for much of the ethos of the International. The primary tasks of the organization were to give international support, intervene in strikes threatened by foreign strike-breakers and fight for the political rights of workers. However, as these rights were often nationally determined, this task undermined the work of the international in the long run as much effort was put into the strengthening of *national* trade unions (Olle and Schoeller 1977). The aggressive nationalism instituted by the employers together with the consolidation of nation-states led to a nationalizing of workers and, through the rudimentary welfare states, a growing symbiosis between the nation building process and improvement of workers' social existence (Munck 2002). In addition, political differences, as seen in the ideological divide over the support of the Paris Commune, differences in conception of solidarity between pragmatists and ideologues, and the split between socialists and anarchists, also contributed heavily to the disintegration of the First International (Wills 1998).

The second period of internationalism from about the 1890s was characterized by the separation of the representation of the political and economic interests of the workers. First of all, there was the formation of the Second International in 1889 spearheaded by Engels until his death. However, unlike the First, the Second International was made up of political parties having national sections and deeply involving themselves in the life of the working class in each country.³ This organization also saw the birth of a new labour and socialist ideology, that of social democracy. Due to the party orientation of the Second International, the trade unions, now confined to representatives of the economic interests of the workers, founded their own organizations separating the national centres from the branch unions. The branch unions formed international associations, called International Trade Secretariats, for each of the major industries of the time, while the national centres came together in the International Trade Union Federation. These organizations and their interrelations remain in one form or the other today, although subsequent historical events have altered their setup and function. WWI dealt a serious blow to the international labour movement as the Second International sank into what Munck (2002) terms 'national chauvinism' with the social democratic parties supporting their respective nation-states in the war. The Russian Revolution saw the formation of the Third International, also called the Communist International or Comintern, in 1919. With this the ideological split within the labour movement between reformists and revolutionaries was a fact. During the time of Lenin the national sections of Comintern was explicitly subordinated to the international centre, but after Lenin's death Stalin more or less used the organization as a branch of the foreign affairs policy of the Soviet Union (Munck 2002).

Regarding the purely trade unionist organizations, the Cold War inflicted a split in the International Trade Union Federation, and the foundation of two bodies, one from each camp; the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) for the Western countries and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) for the socialist states. Due to their practical nature the ITSs were to a greater extent spared the difficulty of ideological differences and did not experience any break in their traditions, although their criteria for affiliation followed the ICFTU and led to the exclusion of trade unions from communist countries (Bendt 1996). Nevertheless, from the outbreak of WWI until fairly recently there was little development in their functioning, and their number has, through mergers, been reduced from 33 in 1914 (Bendt 1996) to ten in 2004 (Phil Jennings at the 9th World Congress of the ITGLWF). According to Castree et al. (2004) they were weakened during the mid-20th century as national identities became solidified and national trade unions played a greater role even on the international terrain through bilateral ventures. This, however, gave rise to what has later been termed 'trade union imperialism' to which I will return.

³ <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/index.htm> Printed 12.06.2004

Strategies

[A]ll together the workers they can fight for it, they can change the world for it. Yeah, that's important - international solidarity!

Delegate from Bangladesh

Sklair (2002) claims that capitalist globalization is failing on two accounts; it can neither resolve the class polarization crisis inherent in it, nor can it deal with the crisis of ecological unsustainability. Instead, Sklair argues, it might well be intensifying both of them. Taking the need for changes as a point of departure, strategies for correcting the wrongs have diverged on several accounts among others on whether the weight should be placed on the nation-state or at the international level. Attempts to conceive strategies for change have been made throughout history, but when the object of transformation is capitalism, Marx is often the point of departure. Although the question of reform or revolution might have caused an unbridgeable cleavage within the socialist movement, I will in what follows treat them both under strategies for change. One reason for this is the grey area in between, exemplified among others by Trotsky (1938) with the identification of transitional demands. Another is that the concept of revolution not necessarily involves the use of arms, as it might be defined as systemic change.

When talking about strategies it is important to consider what they are targeting. I will start off by looking at the choice between targeting the national and/or the international level, a choice which involves theorizing where the power lies. Although both the analyses of Hardt and Negri (2000) and Petras (1999) revolve around the issue of whether the current situation is best described as globalization/empire or imperialism, their conclusions are wide apart. While Hardt and Negri regard the nation-state as a bygone, Petras (1999:30), introducing the term 'New Statism', maintains that this is the most widespread misconception among present day writers: "never has the nation-state played a more decisive role, intervened with, [sic] more vigor and consequence in shaping economic exchanges and investment at the local, national and international level". In defining globalization as the inter-dependence of nations and the shared nature of their economies, and imperialism as the domination and exploitation by imperial states and transnational corporations of underdeveloped countries, Petras reaches the conclusion that the latter concept is much more appropriate. Globalization and the associated notion of a seriously circumscribed nation-state is an ideology discouraging opposing social forces from targeting the most essential element in the creation of an alternative to imperialistic capitalism – the nation-state. Hardt and Negri (2000), on the other hand, argue that due to the imperialist project being a project of the nation-state, the concept has to be replaced by that of Empire, a characteristic of which is the direct opposition between capital and labour without the intermediation of the state. This divergence has implications for strategy, with Petras maintaining that the central control of the nation-state and the capacity to wield it as a weapon are key points in determining future

scenarios. Resistances to the status quo are defined by their structural position, and any appeal to universalism and internationalism is contradicted by the continuing power of nation-states and their ruling classes. Although there has been an increase in international exchange, capitalists are still deeply implicated in the national project and depend to a large extent on the nation-state for support. Petras even argues that the adversaries of imperialism have been sidetracked by the view of the state as an anachronism. This corresponds to Hirst and Thompson's (1999) argument that the current situation is well short of depriving national governments of the ability to manage their economy, and that opposite allegations lead to a paralysis on part of political actors. Petras (1999) also perceives the working class as having interests in a closed national economy, pointing to periods where they have wielded state power and have "undermined the power of the export classes and made growth of the domestic market the center of economic policy" (Petras 1999:15). Hence, it comes as no surprise when he argues that the internal composition of the state is the essential tool for transforming the globalist project. In addition, he regards international exchanges as secondary; national-state power could be a basis for shifting production and consumption from the global markets to the local. In addition, but for more practical reasons, Holte (2002) argues that in shaping an alternative to international market liberalism, focussing first and foremost on the international level will lead to failure of the project. He does not deny the importance of international agreements, but when it comes to governing future economic developments there is an absolute need to nationalize markets.

In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels (1848) wrote that united action, at least among the most advanced countries, constitutes one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. Lenin (ref. Harding 1996) maintained, as far as consciousness is concerned, the workers, bereft as they were of a position in the national culture, would as a result of their common culture of labour attain a cosmopolitan character. In place of the myriad of local differentiations between people that existed in the pre-capitalist world, the universal class divide pertaining to capitalism was held to be enormously simplifying and clarifying. The world's exploited masses would therefore soon develop common organizational structures and a common conviction of the need for a socialist system to replace the current one. Marx and Engels also envisaged that socialism would have to spread rapidly to encompass the whole world, thus conceiving internationalism as an integral feature of socialism (Post and Wright 1989). Similar views are expressed by recent day world system theoreticians depicting the capitalist world economy as a major constraint on socialist states situated within it. Wallerstein (ref. So and Chiu 1995) argued that establishing a system of state ownership does not mean establishing a socialist economy. Rather, as long as it remains a participant in the capitalist world economy, a state with collective ownership of the means of production is merely a collective capitalist firm. Regarding the possibility of forming a separate socialist economy within the framework of a capitalist world economy, the delegate from Sri Lanka referred to what he said at a conference in the 1950s:

And when I spoke, I said: 'I don't agree with our Soviet friends when they speak of two world economies; a capitalist and a socialist. There's only one world economy, and one world market'. And I believe that's why the Soviet Union collapsed, they tried to make out of

themselves that they had formed a separate world economy, or the economy in the Soviet Union. But they were operating within the capitalist, global market.

Trotsky is often held to be the main proponent of internationalism due to his preoccupation with the world system in the theory of 'permanent revolution' (Beilharz 1987). The theory has two parts; first of all, bourgeois revolutions will become impossible in the sense that where they start they will transform into a proletarian one. The impossibility of bourgeois revolution is also a theme adopted by neo-Marxist development theory. This constitutes a break with the conception of revolutions in successive stages, since the notion of a 'permanent revolution' conceives of an uninterrupted revolutionary process that enables the proletariat of backward countries to overturn capitalism without first passing through a completed bourgeois revolution (Larrain 1989).

The second part of the theory of 'permanent revolution' contains the argument that because capital has become international, so too the revolution necessarily becomes international. This view was clearly expressed in some of the interviews I conducted with an official in the ITGLWF and the delegate from Sri Lanka:

[S]ince capitalism itself has gone from extending from nation to nation, into encompassing the global basis, it's more appropriate for the working class to organize correspondingly – globally.

Delegate from Sri Lanka

And we should try and have a global structure that matches the way that capital's working.

ITGLWF Official

Thus to Trotsky (1938), internationalism is no abstract principle, but rather a reflection of the character of the world economy. Recognising companies as part of this character, the General Secretary and an official of the ITGLWF agreed on the need for a global strategy:

[B]ecause so many of the companies in the industry are global companies, you need to have a trade union structure to mirror that to deal with it.

However, to claim the existence of a global capitalism is not to claim that capitalism is globalized in the sense of erasing place difference, uneven geographical development and local specificity. On the contrary, the geographical contradictions involved is one of the main challenges for the labour movement (Castree et al. 2004). Workers are part of a world economy characterized by geographical difference, and this is why the possibility of pitting them against each other is a real threat:

[I]t's very difficult to get workers to come to a point where they genuinely recognize commonality of interest. Why? Because we happen to live in a capitalist global economy which is based on competition, which is based on winners and losers.

ITGLWF Official

The reason for this competition among workers is often held to be that they are the most place-based factor of production (Castree et al. 2004). However, on the other hand, what happens to workers one place can not be understood without placing it in the context of relations extending

across space. This issue was raised by the President of the ITGLWF in this Presidential Address to the World Congress:

[W]e truly, truly live in an interdependent world [...] we have to keep reminding ourselves of the mighty forces, that no worker is immune in this globalization process of what is taking place around on the other side of the globe, no one.

By virtue of these increasingly intense interconnections, workers in different places may be pitched into relations of either competition or cooperation, depending on the circumstances (Castree et al. 2004). In dealing with imperialism as a feature of the world economy, manifested in the exploitation of what he calls backward countries, Trotsky (1938) maintains that since these countries are part of the world economy, their development is not just uneven, but has a combined character; the most primitive and traditional economic forms are articulated with modern industry. In turn, this lays the foundation for the fusion of struggles in the backward countries between the struggle for national independence and bourgeois democracy on the one hand, and socialist struggle against world imperialism on the other. This convergence of struggles is also recognised by Amin (2003) when he proposes a strategy of combining the goal of self-reliant national construction achieved through delinking with a gradual realization of world socialism through crystallization of social forces at the national level wrenching reforms, but with an ultimate aim of 'globalizing' struggles. However, both Trotsky and Amin caution that in the national struggle, it is important to oppose the workers to the 'national' bourgeoisie. Amin even claims that the victories achieved by national liberation movements after WWII caused an illusion in some of the peripheral countries that capitalism could be forced to adapt and become civilized.

The debate within Marxist thinking regarding the choice between a national and an international strategy arose in the aftermath of the October Revolution in Russia, when its leaders were faced with a difficult dilemma; what next? The question asked was whether to use the newly conquered power to further the class struggle internationally or to consolidate the power within the established interstate system (Arrighi et al. 1989). The Russian Revolution was meant, in the thought of Lenin (ref. Harding 1996), to function as a catalyst for world revolution, but when counter-revolution beset Europe, the Soviet Republic was left isolated and besieged. Not wanting to relinquish power because socialism could not be spread, Stalin changed the agenda proclaiming that it was indeed possible to build socialism in only one country (Post and Wright 1989). He put his faith in the development of the productive forces and administration, and socialism was essentially reduced to planned industrialization. The relevance today of the feud between Stalin and Trotsky around this issue lies in the fact that the ideology which emerged victorious heavily influenced the subsequent strategies for the next half a century, while the other ideology was, like Trotsky himself, ostracized. Among others Mao (1938), making an inventory of friends and foes within the national front, includes the Trotskyists as traitors and thus a main enemy, leading in turn to their repression by both the Guomindang, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao and the Japanese occupation forces (Callinicos 1990).

Stalin (year unknown) derived from the theory of the uneven and spasmodic development the possibility, if not necessity, of attaining socialism in a few, or even one isolated capitalist country. Trotsky (1928) was one of the first to point to the fact that what was happening in the Soviet Union contravened the spirit of socialism, and he is often held as the main antagonist to Stalin's theory of 'socialism in one country'. To him, as already mentioned, it is just as important to emphasize this combined character of development. He maintains that Stalin's proposition would only be valid if countries developed independently of each other, in addition to unevenly. The uneven development renders a simultaneous world revolution impossible, but the interdependence of countries in the developing international division of labour excludes the possibility of building socialism in one country. Hyman (1999) upholds that the current era is characterized by a 'regime competition' where the location decisions of transnational corporations, seeking profitable investments, punish those national governments trying to defend the Keynesian welfare state in lieu of opting for the fiscal rectitude at the behest of the hegemonic ideology. In my interview with two of the delegates from India, they expressed, in light of the tough competition involved in global capitalism, the need for international action. Others also dealt with the circumscribed possibility of raising labour standards in one country considering the race to the bottom going on in pursuance of profit on part of companies, and inward investment on part of nation-states.:

A downward spiral which begins where the best paid and the best trade union organized workers do their jobs to the lower paid and the poorer organized workers in other countries. And the next twist of the spiral, colleagues, as you know, is one where those jobs are also lost to the unorganized workers, the exploited workers, workers of the free trade zones, forced workers and desperate child workers in pursuance of this great profit based on greater exploitation of workers

The President of the ITGLWF

We need to have more and more an international approach to organizing, because one of the main problems that we face these days is that the industry is mobile, and particularly in the export sector the companies are constantly looking to increase their profit, and to do that, of course, they want to reduce their costs. So the tendency is to shift production to where they can find the cheapest and the best quality [...] I think that international trade union organizations will become increasingly important. Or if they don't, then workers have a problem, because they'll not be able to have their interests protected by national or factory unions alone. It needs to be organizations that can build solidarity across national boundaries, even across continental boundaries.

ITGLWF Official

The unions in the industrialized countries must seriously consider the establishment of democratic unions in developing countries. That is the guarantee, the only one that they have in order to maintain their benefits, those they have achieved through years of struggle.

Delegate from the Dominican Republic

When there are so many differences [...] - that's how they played off workers in the past. When they start to sort of standardize, that's when things get interesting [...] If [...] companies which own their locations worldwide, and therefore have control over the operations might want to standardize aspects of production it is very interesting for us because if that is happening then that is a glorious pretext for having a global works' council meeting, [...] a reason for getting workers together to compare standard job times for example and share information.

ITGLWF Official

Trotsky (1928) takes as his point of departure the development of the productive forces, long assumed to have broken through national borders. Marxists usually hold the development of productive forces to be the historically progressive role of capitalism, since it broke down the sub-national and, later, the national barriers to trade. Capitalism was thus the first mode of production universalizing itself, and Lenin, among others, expected a tendency to obliterate national distinctions as a result (Harding 1996). Amin (2003) claims that what causes the obsolescence of capitalism today is what he terms the technological revolution. This revolution is held to exert powerful pressures for restructuring of the productive systems. Trotsky, writing 75 years earlier, points to the economic impossibility of a self-sufficient socialist society unless there is willingness to halt the development of the productive forces, for which national boundaries are too narrow, and slide back into economic backwardness. Even in the most advanced countries building socialism on a national basis would imply a general decline and a cutting down of productive forces. Petras (1999) on the other hand, criticizes this notion of inevitability and the view of interdependence as a higher level of development as based on a tunnel vision of history.

The only area in which Stalin admits any need for support from abroad is regarding the avoidance of a capitalist intervention, for which he would need the sympathy of the proletariat in Western European countries (Stalin 1924). Referring to one of Lenin's arguments regarding the revolution, he maintains that the Soviet Union alone possessed both the necessary and sufficient material prerequisites for the complete construction of socialism. Trotsky (1928), however, gives quite a different interpretation of the same statement, and holds that what Lenin meant was that due to Russia's backwardness, she was the weakest link in the imperialist front and thereby the easiest place to start the world revolution. Once in power, though, the working class would encounter great difficulties in the progress towards socialism. And again, despite the advanced countries being in a better position to build socialism if the revolution is attained, even they will have to rely on world technology and an international division of labour.

As both, it seems to me, are in favour of achieving the world revolution in the last instance, the focal point of disagreement is how this is to be done. Stalin (year unknown) appears to uphold a vision of the world victory of the proletariat as a sum of national victories. In other words, there is no reason to await a world revolution; individual countries are able to build complete socialism and later on, out of these socialist countries, there will be built a world socialist economy. With the emphasis on national revolutions, Stalin (1924) is also very much in favour of the working class building inter-class alliances within countries, especially with the peasants. Introducing his concept of hegemony, Gramsci (ref. Sassoon 1987) also claims that even though the proletariat is international in character, it has to 'nationalize' itself and lead an alliance with other classes whose interests are national or even sub-national in scope, such as the peasants. It is through hegemony that a class provides the basis for a national unity. Gramsci, in other words, goes beyond a definition of the socialist revolution as a proletarian one, and maintains that the transition from capitalism to socialism requires the creation of alliances. He thus accepted Stalin's view, and maintained that a permanent alliance of workers and peasants was necessary, but he is

also criticized for not comprehending the qualitative differences between those two classes' situations (Sassoon 1987, Fiori 1990). This criticism is in accordance with Marx and Engels' (1848) caution regarding the conservativeness of all other classes. Writing at a time when Italy's integrity as a nation was at stake, Gramsci (1921) attributed a national role to the proletariat. He holds that before an economy guided by a world plan can be established, it is necessary to pass through several stages of upscaling, one of the scales being regional combinations of nations (Gramsci 1930-32). Trotsky (1928), on the other hand, refutes the world socialist economy as the sum total of national socialist economies, and claims that it can only be formed on the basis of the world division of labour already crystallizing under capitalism. It will, in other words, be constituted and built not through first completing the socialist revolution in a number of individual countries, but through a world proletarian revolution requiring decades. Furthermore, according to Harding (1996), Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution implied that the workers should rely solely upon their own strength, without seeking alliances with other classes. That is, he rejected explicitly the possibility of the peasantry acting as the agent of socialist revolution (Callinicos 1990). The whole question of alliance can, however, in the end be reduced to the question of whether the revolution ought to be conducted in two stages (that is, first having a bourgeois-democratic revolution) or to jump straight to socialism. Trotsky (1928) likens the ones who approach the prospects of a revolution within national borders to the social patriots who also fall victim to national narrowness portraying their own national state as the Promised Land of socialism thus 'temporarily' sacrificing international solidarity. Referring to the argument that even the fight for higher wages and better working conditions cannot be successful unless carried out at an international level, he concludes that the prospect for achieving a socialist society with national forces alone looks bleak. This was also recognised by one of the officials I interviewed:

[W]e would obviously be talking about concepts of like living wage and trying to make sure that people were not working excessive amounts of overtime [...], the whole idea of having international standards is to say "look, decent work means this, and it means this for everybody across the world". You know, there's a formula for a living wage, it's not a fixed amount, for what the formula says is enough to cover basic needs and some discretionary income.

Regarding the fundamental class aims of the proletariat, as distinguished from these partial objectives, Trotsky (1928) is convinced that they cannot in any way be realized by national means or within national boundaries. He infers that if this is regarded untrue, that is, the possibility of attaining the aims through efforts at the national level is maintained, the backbone of internationalism is broken. Furthermore, Trotsky argues that fighting for the preservation of the national basis of revolution undermines the revolution by crippling the international ties of workers. However, this is not to say that the national level should be left out of the question, because Trotsky recognises that dichotomizing nationalism and internationalism, and thereby requiring, in the case of the latter, a simultaneous international revolution might result in inaction. It would thus be unfair to claim that Trotsky did not pay heed to the need for grounding the struggles in the national context.

On the other hand, by downplaying the need for internationalism, Trotsky (1928) regards Stalin's theory as dangerous; if it is possible to build socialism in one country, there is no reason not to believe in this prior to seizing power. This might lead the communist parties and the trade unions to focus their attention solely on national efforts, thus leading to the disintegration of international organizations through the building of national alliances. And here is the crux of the matter; while Trotsky (ref. Stalin 1924) admits that the broad masses of the peasantry, in addition to some bourgeois groupings, supported the Russian proletariat in the revolution and the coming to power, he maintains that there will arise hostile collisions with both once inroads are made on property. One of the reasons for this is that while the agricultural labourer and the worker are of the same class, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie are not, and a wedge can often be driven between workers and peasants on the issue of commodity prices in addition to property. These contradictions can, according to Trotsky (1938), only be solved on an international scale and through an international organization. If, he argues, the Soviet Union's internal difficulties, being reflections of world contradictions, can be settled internally without a world revolution, then any international organization would be reduced to a decorative institution with subsidiary roles. Olle and Schoeller (1977) claim that the consolidation of the nation-state at the end of the 19th century led to the separation of the economic and political struggles of the workers. The trade union struggle became 'nationalized' and the unions became the representatives of only the *economic* interests of the workers. This separation also manifested itself in changed objectives at the international level. As the nation-state became the context of capital accumulation and the reproduction of workers, international trade unionism became, according to Olle and Schoeller, rather feeble. With national conditions as the primary concern, internationalism was confined to periods of economic stagnation. Applied to trade unions, they maintain that internationalism was rendered insignificant in periods when national trade unions were able to satisfy the workers' demands, thus pointing to a situation where reasonable national conditions are held to be the be-all and end-all of workers' struggles. In this sense the content of international trade unionism can be described as being more of a 'national protectionism'. Thus, as the nation-state proved a fertile ground for wrenching reform and legislation the trade unions focussed their attention of that level, leaving international affairs on the backburner (Wills 2001). Although this might look like an opposition to Trotsky, it might also be argued that the reason why working at the national level proved successful in this period was that capital itself was more national with the social articulation involved in Fordism. Thus, while the contradictions of capitalism at the world level might have had some bearing on national economies, it can be claimed that this was less so at that time than other periods. Streeck (quoted in Wills 2001), for instance, remarks that in pursuit of their interest, capital and labour can choose between building cross-national alliances or national inter-class alliances, with the actual choice being affected by the opportunities offered by respectively international and national institutions.

Trotsky's internationalist line was defeated, and Stalin's and Bukharin's theory of socialism in one country became the model upon which communist states based themselves. The resulting polarization of the world during the Cold War dealt a serious blow to the labour movement,

splitting it along a vertical ideological line, concealing the horizontal line of cleavage separating classes (Gallin 1999). Increasingly, internationalism as a strategy for socialist revolution became defined as unreserved support of the politics of the Soviet Union (Harding 1996). In addition, the focus, especially in Asia, but also elsewhere in the colonial countries, increasingly shifted from the urban proletariat to peasant movements led by intellectuals. Thus, while proletarian internationalism continued to be part of the Comintern's rhetoric, the actuality had shifted in several dimensions. Writing about the dissolution of Comintern, Mao (1943) poses the question as to why this should happen. He claims that it is one of the principles of Marxism-Leninism that revolutionary organizations should be adapted to the necessities of the struggle. Consequently, since the Comintern in his eyes is hindering the development of the struggle in each country it must be abolished. He rather focussed on the strengthening of national communist parties as the way forward. One of the reasons Mao posits for why there is no longer any need for an international centre, is that it is not possible for a unified international organization to adapt to the ever more complicated national situations and inter-relations between countries. Correct leadership is thus rooted in a detailed analysis of national conditions, and it is more necessary than ever to let the national communist parties undertake this investigation. An international organization is far removed from the concrete struggles in each country, and should therefore be disbanded.

Mao (1938), coming from backward China, was concerned with the resistance against Japanese imperialism and the bourgeois-democratic revolution. With his peasant background, he was also concerned with winning the support of the peasant masses by listening intently to their demands and proposals. Furthermore, he sought to demonstrate the peasants' relative importance vis-à-vis the, in China, insignificant urban proletariat (Hunt 1989). He is thus very much in favour of building one alliance or front based on national patriotism, this alliance including workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and even the left-oriented part of the national bourgeoisie, and he also mentions the lack of national consciousness and pride as reasons for the difficulties that the country is experiencing (Mao 1938). Although he had Stalin's backing for the 'four-class bloc' (Callinicos 1990), this would fall within Lenin's definition of opportunism, which he held as causing the collapse of the Second International; advocacy of class collaboration, adaptation to bourgeois nationalism and renunciation of the class struggle for fear of repelling the petty bourgeoisie (Lenin 1914). This 'national populism' has according to Amin (2003) crumbled, and he recognises the need for building a global front against what he terms obsolescent capitalism. In a recent critique of the socialist movement, Radice (2001) accuses socialists for exactly the same felony as Marx and Engels criticized their contemporaries – he claims that they all have one thing in common as regards analyses and prognoses – their outlook is typically national. This concerns Stalin's and Mao's 'socialism in one country', Keynes' social democratic articulation within countries and the post-colonial theories of national liberation. Radice thus charges socialists of only paying lip-service to the ideal of internationalism, as they have regarded the nation-state as the focal point of politics in spite of their rhetoric of proletarian fraternity and anti-imperialist struggle. In light of the loss of congruence between labour's and capital's economic interests and political

influence, Radice (2001) maintains that it is more realistic to break with old national class alliances and instead seek the strengthening of an autonomous power of labour.

Gramsci (1930-32) tries to sort out the disagreement between Stalin and Trotsky, and reaches the more or less obvious conclusion that what needs further elaboration is how the international situation should be considered in its national aspect. He agrees that the line of development is towards internationalism, and that the point of departure has to be national. Agreeing with Mao, the internal relations of any nation is, according to Gramsci, the result of a combination which is original and in a certain sense unique, and this needs to be understood in its own right even though the perspective is international and cannot be otherwise. Without an appropriate understanding of the national context and the combination of national forces which the proletariat has to lead and develop, he maintains that there cannot be an accurate analysis of the international setting. This point of view was raised in the interview I conducted with two delegates from India when they were asked whether the weight in the aftermath of the MFA phase out should be placed on national or international strategies. They thus regarded a national strategy as most important due to the different situations in different countries. However, they also pointed out that this should not be to the detriment of working at the international level, which they saw as a terrain growing in importance. The same concern was raised regarding the exclusion of China; as long as there is no communication with trade unions in China, it is very difficult for anyone, including a global union, to know much about the conditions there. I will return to the issue of China in the fifth chapter.

Proletarian internationalism

As already mentioned, Marx criticized the political economy of the classical economists for focusing on the nation-state as the unit of analysis (Arrighi et al. 1989). He himself shifted this focus to the world-economic space, which he did not conceive in the conventional way as an interstate economy consisting of discrete national economic spaces. The world market determined the most general context of the class struggle, and, consequently, internationalism has been a key component of proletarian struggles for a classless society. Marx and Engels' (1848:232) claimed in the *Communist Manifesto* that the subjection to capital involved in modern industrial labour has stripped workers "of every trace of national character". Further, they envisioned a world of vanishing national differences with the rise of a world market and uniformity in the mode of production. If not agreeing that national differences have vanished, the uniformity in the mode of production leading to common concerns among workers was recognized in most of my interviews, here in the words of the two officials I interviewed:

[F]undamentally in the textile, clothing and footwear production a worker is a worker is a worker and is faced with the same sorts of problems.

It's amazing how much workers have in common; invariably they face problems of exploitation; they're not paid enough, and they work too many hours, they don't have enough time off, they don't have enough to buy the food and other requirements that they have for

themselves and their family. So, there's much more that unites workers in terms of common interests than divides them.

This recognition is used as a point of departure for proletarian internationalism. According to Pasture and Verberckmoes (1998), Marx and Engels never worked out a consistent theory of nationalism because they considered it a transient phenomenon and thus only of secondary importance. The internally integrated nation-state was regarded a condition for capitalist development and hence an inevitable phase prior to socialist revolution, among other things because the nation-state is where the class struggle originated. Implicit in these considerations there is an assumption that to strive for internationalism is progressive. Writing at a time geographical expansion through imperialism was on the agenda, Luxemburg maintained that the internationalization therein would render nationalism not only outmoded, but also reactionary (Harding 1996).

In a recent anthology on working-class internationalism and the significance of nationalism for the trade union movement, Pasture and Verberckmoes (1998) criticizes Marx and Engels for their lack of understanding of the national pursuits of ethnic and/or national groups. They further view Marx and Engels' attitudes towards nationalism as pragmatic and tactical; national movements ought to be supported in those cases where they assisted or were beneficial to the socialist cause. Class was considered the crucial dimension, thus overshadowing every other identity, and there was hence no heed paid to organizational and ideological diversity within the labour movement. Against this, Amin (2003) contends that contemporary political strategies are bent on achieving exactly this fragmentation of any forces possibly challenging the system through the use and manipulation of identity claims. He especially targets what he terms 'culturalism', which means that differences based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation and ideology take precedence over class differences. In order to navigate in the thicket of identity claims, he proposes a yardstick by which to measure the current movements: if their demands link up with the struggle against exploitation and the aspiration for greater democracy they are progressive; demands that are not part of a social programme or not critical of capitalist globalization he regards as reactionary tools serving the interests of dominant capital. According to Amin the political masters of contemporary global capitalism know that a new internationalism would be fatal to it, and thus know what they are doing when they support, use and manipulate the identity movements.

Pasture and Verberckmoes' (1998) argument, on the other hand, is that national feelings have been much more important to the working class than has been admitted, and they maintain that despite the trade union movement's internationalist rhetoric, it has virtually completely aligned itself with the nation-state. In other words, as far as international cooperation is concerned, the discrepancy between manifesto and practice is overwhelming. The book contains several articles on the labour movements of countries experiencing national conflicts, and one of the contributions considers the Basque case, where the nationalist movement has created its own trade unions, thus appealing directly to the working class (Mees 1998). Pasture and Verberckmoes also cast doubt on the open and non-exclusive character of the working class pointing to the appeal of

xenophobic, right-wing populist parties, especially among unskilled workers, but also the unemployed. This constitutes a direct challenge to the labour movement and socialist parties. Lastly, they contend that the working class and the labour movement, more than others, have associated themselves with the nation-state. This claim is substantiated by reference to the national integration of the working class through the development of the welfare state. However, regarding international inaction, their choice of an example is perhaps less fortunate; they refer to the closing of a Renault plant in Belgium causing job losses for 3,000 workers. Despite being a blow to the European Works Councils, due to the fact that they were not consulted prior to the closure, this case later begot what has been called the first Euro-strike (Stavis 2002). With a narrow focus on only the corporatist side of trade unionism, Pasture and Verberckmoes (1998) also allege that if there is no possibility of a supranational welfare state, then unions should give priority to defending national welfare arrangements. In addition, the lack of trade union involvement in the shaping of EU policies is taken as a sign of their redundancy at the European level. However, this can be questioned, as the European Works Councils Directive legally obliges TNCs to establish transnational institutions for handling industrial relations in part as a result of campaigning on behalf of trade unions (Wills 2001). It is also a queer way of reasoning, and the authors seem to hold a different perspective later on in the chapter when writing about the sub-national level: “If collective bargaining is structured at company level, workers can be manipulated and played off against each other, particularly when the labour market is weak. Furthermore, it cuts down on the trade union movement’s opportunities to appeal to solidarity between the workers” (Pasture and Verberckmoes 1998:23). Why this ‘divide and rule’ should hold for the company level and not the national, they are silent about.

Geographical scales

Gramsci (ref. Sassoon 1987) was of the opinion that what is interesting is the *relationship* between the national and the international level, and not which of them is the more important. He thus regards the working class as both a national and an international class, and it ought, in other words, to spearhead the struggle for emancipation on both a national and the international scale (Gramsci 1921). Ruccio et al. (1991) argue that there has been a strict national-international dichotomy in radical thought concerning the nature of social actors and their identities and struggles within global capitalism. Bakunin (year unknown), writing about building internationalism from the bottom up, delves into the question of scale in a more chronological fashion. He asserts that the organization of workers into trade unions requires little in the way of intellectual preparation, and that through unionization the worker will realize the merit of fellowship. Through the experiences gained from struggles at the plant level, however, workers will come to realize that organizing workers solely at the shop floor is not sufficient, and that the union has to expand throughout the locality. Subsequently, the same experience leads to a quest for translocal solidarity as scab labour is brought in, or workers are pitted against each other across localities. Bakunin (year unknown:unnumbered) hence points to the necessity of internationalism: “in the long run the relatively tolerable position of the workers in one country can be maintained

only on condition that it be more or less the same in other countries”. In the ideological field, Gramsci (1930-32) maintained that to appeal simply to the non-national is counterproductive as it leads to passivity and inertia, referring to the argument that no one thinks they ought to make a start in fear of ending up isolated. On the other hand, the working class has to realize that its self-emancipation can only come about through the existence of a system of world revolutionary forces all conspiring to the same end (Gramsci 1921). Furthermore, he introduces the concept of ‘disciplined internationalism’, meaning that the national working classes ought to have some sort of guarantee of mutual aid and solidarity, and this is only achievable through a powerful and centralized international authority. This amounts to the role of international organizations being reduced to something resembling a night-watchman to fall back upon in the last instance. Although acknowledging a wider role for the international, the delegates from India and Mauritius seemed to uphold a vision that the most important task is to ensure that its national affiliates can increase their membership, and, in the long run, help to safeguard their survival. But again, it is important to not dichotomize national and international. As already mentioned, it is not uncommon to claim that workers are the least mobile factor of production, and since a trade union’s *raison d’être* is to defend the interests of its members it needs to adopt strategies at several levels. Hence, while it might seem paradoxical that a place-based social group should act across space, Castree et al (2004:210) try to explain why it is not: “in our interdependent capitalist world, the defence of local livelihoods often necessitates reaching out over broader geographical scales precisely because [...] the translocal is *in* the local” (emphasis in original). The introduction of the concept of scale, as the middle term between place and space, in analyses of the strategies of the labour movement might also be useful. Wage-workers’ social relations with employers and regulatory institutions are, in their view, profoundly geographical being scaled in complex ways by expressing themselves simultaneously in place and space. It is thus important to recognize that worker-capital relations in a particular locality are simultaneously determined by both local and extra-local dynamics at a variety of scales right up to the global. Thus, the authors identify four important scales for workers; the workplace, the local, the national and the international, and maintain that the relative importance of them will vary between different national contexts and in different situations. The need for workers to adopt strategies at several scales is deduced from what they call one of the basic contradictions of capitalism, namely the articulation of the spatial mobility of corporations with the need for them to extract profits from particular localities. This led the President of the ITGLWF, in his address to the Congress, to stress the importance of meeting the challenge of the MFA phase out with both a national strategy, due to the fact that workers are going to be affected in their respective societies, and an international strategy targeting the idea of leaving the market in charge. Some of the affiliates, among others Bangladesh have opted for this kind of two-pronged strategy. Through a coalition called the Bangladesh National Council (BNC) workers have issued two sets of demands; one targeting the government of Bangladesh regarding compensation, the other the international institutions working closely with the ITGLWF. They have also thrown an international conference for trade unions on the issue of challenges in the post-MFA textile and garment industries.

However, the choice of scale might lead to what Castree et al. (2004) term ‘geographical dilemmas’ – what might make sense at one geographical scale might have unfortunate consequences at other scales. This was recognized by one of the officials I interviewed in the ITGLWF:

[National unions are] fighting hard to retain jobs in the textile sector. Now, the thing is, any union would do that. Any union, anywhere in the world would want to do that - that's what they're there for, that's their *raison d'être* – to defend the interests of their members. But in the grand scheme of things you cannot escape the fact, if you like, that you rob Peter to pay Paul.

The officials I interviewed also stressed that one of the most important tasks for their global union federation is to get national trade unions to take a wider view of their situation:

[T]rade unions often put their own national interests before the interests of workers internationally [...] [P]olicy is determined by governments as what is in their national interest. And sometimes that's reflected in trade union attitudes too – they're worried about their own particular jobs, their own members and so on. And sometimes that tends to lead them to do things that are really not in the interest of workers when you look at the situation as a whole, or the industry as a whole. So I think part of our role as a *global* federation is to try to encourage workers, including those in the dominant economies, to take a wider view. And we're all guilty of looking at things from our own perspective, with our own eyes, and often if we stand back and see a bigger picture then we can see a much more logical way to go forward. If we're in the middle of something, then we have an expression; 'you can't see the wood for the trees'.

Harvey (ref. Castree et al. 2004) claims that the crux of the matter is at which geographical scale workers define their interests and loyalties, but he notes that all too often people lock themselves into one geographical scale of thinking, treating the issues there as more fundamental than at the others. Castree et al. pose, in their concluding chapter, the following question: at what geographical scale and with which people do the interests of any given set of workers lie? Their answer is that somehow the needs and wants at all levels must be made to complement each other. In addition, to focus upon geographical scales does not necessarily imply that it is at the ‘biggest’ scale that power resides. That is, sometimes place-based actions in one locality may be just as effective, or more effective, than translocal action. In other words, the importance of acting at any one particular scale is relative and contingent. In his activities report, the General Secretary stressed the importance nowadays of identifying where the power lies and determine pressure points accordingly. Thus, the scale at which to act can vary from the workplace to the global level. However, he also emphasized that the power is increasingly concentrated at the global level, especially with the retailers and brand names:

Those pressure points can be of the United Nations, it can be of the ILO, it can be of the OECD [...], it can be on governments [...] It also involves, in many cases, raising the issue with companies engaged in the industries in that specific country [...] And again on some occasions, rather than making approaches to the company which is the transgressor we would make immediate approach to the brand name or the retailer who is sourcing from the company, because that's where the power lies. In many cases, there will be all varieties of approaches in any one specific instance. And again, that is an approach that is evolving all the time, that where power shifts we have to move with it.

National class alliance – the song of the sirens?

Returning to the axioms of Marxism, it is possible to say that the nation and the proletariat have one thing in common; both are the product of capitalist development. Nevertheless, despite the same origin, the two are often in opposition. The nation contains all classes, and one of its demands can be internal unity in opposition to other nations, thus setting worker against worker. It also diverts the attention of the masses from social questions, and thereby the class struggle, to national questions common to the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Subsequently this creates favourable soil for propaganda regarding ‘harmony of interests’, and a policy of inciting nations against each other. This is to the detriment of the class interests of the proletariat, and, being a strategy of ‘divide and rule’, constitutes a serious obstacle to the work of uniting workers of different nationalities (Stalin 1913). In this way, international solidarity can be conceived as a project for dismantling nation-states in favour of constructing a global community (Hardt and Negri 2000). Furthermore, Hardt and Negri argue that the consequence following from the premise that the nation-state is a central link in the chain of domination, is that the *national* proletariat must dismantle itself as such and release international solidarity from the shackles of the nation-states. The nation is thus conceived as a historical category belonging to the definite epoch of rising capitalism. Stalin (1913) contended that the transition from feudalism to capitalism simultaneously involves a process of constituting people into nations. The reason for this is held to be the problem of the market. The bourgeoisie strives to win the competition against the bourgeoisie of other nations, and to do this they needed a commodity market under their own control and thereby secure a ‘home’ market. In much the same manner, Luxemburg (1915) claims that nation-states, national unity and independence are ideological constructs used under the constitution of the capitalist nations of Western Europe. She further maintains that capitalism needs large united territories for its further development, and thus that it is in reality incompatible with the splitting up into small states. However, the national program played, in her opinion, only a historic role as a means to fasten the class rule and create within nations the necessary conditions for the bourgeoisie’s growth. This state encapsulation of the class struggle contradicted the uniting of the proletariat of all countries (Arrighi et al. 1989). The question of nationhood has nevertheless gained a prominent position within Marxist theory, and was especially important among the theoreticians of the Second International, since any particular answer to the question would imply different political strategies, struggles and programs (Hobsbawm 1990).

Some questions emerge by using a word like international in the first place, the most important of which is: what are the positions of nations in this? Hardt and Negri (2000) maintain that the words antinationalist, and hence supranational and global, are better suited than internationalist, if by internationalist is meant a consensus preserving the differences among various national identities although negotiating some agreement. The call for the workers of the world to unite was a call for them to unite directly through commonality of interest disregarding national identities. Consequently, international solidarity had to be recognized not as an act of altruism, a sacrifice made for working classes of different nationalities, but rather as in the interest of each national proletariat qua proletariat. However, helping ‘brothers’ in need abroad for the

sake of helping oneself is prone to claims about protectionism (Visser 1998). Solidarity will be dealt with at length in the next chapter.

Luxemburg (1915) argues that although the national phase has been preserved, its real content and function has been perverted as the nation has become a cloak covering imperialistic desires. The delegate from Sri Lanka, being a self-proclaimed Trotskyist, demonstrated his detachment from the national in the following way:

I was very impressed when Neil Armstrong and the first group of astronauts who went around the moon [...] when they had gone back, and they saw the earth, their first reaction was '*Our Earth*'. And he said that he could never again think of himself only as belonging to the United States, because he saw The Earth. [...] *Our Earth!* We belong to The Earth. The United States is one part of it. So I have long ago divorced myself from even my country. I belong [...] to mankind on this planet.

According to Luxemburg, and also the Sri Lankan delegate, the contradistinction between national interests and international solidarity is a mere “figment of the imagination created by the bourgeoisie. Not only is nationalism economically retrogressive due to smallness of units, but it also, as mentioned, undermining workers’ solidarity by making national affiliation the primary signifier of identity (Harding 1996). Both the aforementioned delegate and the General Secretary in his report recognize this as a barrier to a full integration of the global working class:

[W]hile capitalism has gone global, the trade unions, and particularly even in Europe, remain very national [...] And that is one of the biggest problems of the global working class, because to become global it must get integrated. But there is no integration.

Delegate from Sri Lanka

[M]any of our union structures are still bound within national frontiers looking first of all at national interests rather than at global worker interests.

The General Secretary

Luxemburg (1915) further argues that there is complete harmony between the national interests and the class interests of the proletariat – both demand carrying on the class struggle. Writing, as she did, during WWI, Luxemburg’s attention is fixed on the causes of the war and how it was made possible. She holds the national cloak as “the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder” (Luxemburg 1915:unnumbered). Trotsky (1938:unnumbered), writing on the threshold of the next world war, reiterates much of the same point as Luxemburg; “capitalism befools the world atmosphere with the poisonous vapours of national and race hatred”. The internationalists thus have to swim against the stream and disclose the roots of the national arrogance. To summarize, Pasture and Verberckmoes (1998), treating all Marxists alike, uphold that Marxist theory in essence depicts the nation-state as a class state, aimed at perpetuating the hegemony of bourgeois rule. Nationalism is thus a device of the bourgeoisie for identifying their class interests with those of the nation, for stifling the proletariat’s class consciousness and, finally, for pitting workers of different nations against each other. While recognising the roll back of national regulation in the era of global capitalism, one of the officials I

interviewed maintained that the concept of the nation-state has not disappeared from peoples' attention:

I don't think the concept of the nation-state has gone away at all. [T]he discussion around MFA phase out is about winners and losers; in terms of which countries are going to win and which countries are going to lose. And the unions, nationally, are buying into that as well [...], to some extent rightfully to see how they can protect their national industry, which you would expect them to do. But if you take a step back, and you look at who are the real winners and losers, it's not a national thing, it's about workers and companies, which to some extent gets played out nationally, but it's just really a process which continues this race to the bottom.

Gramsci (ref. Fiori 1990), being less preoccupied with economics, concerned himself more with the ideological field. His originality as a Marxist is thus his conception of bourgeois rule as based not so much on violence and coercion as the acceptance of the rule of the bourgeois world view. The philosophy of the ruling class emerges as 'common sense' among workers after several vulgarizations, and this would also hold for nationalist sentiments. As several of the quotes above show, my informants often gave the impression that it is difficult to get national trade unions to leave the mainly national outlook behind. However, in an interview the General Secretary expressed a feeling of changes being on the way:

[T]he multinational companies abandoned nationality and such like a long time ago, unions are still quite a lot bound, you know, they hold on to their passports. That, I think, is beginning to change.

Lenin (ref. Brewer 1990) also attempted to explain the events of WWI. The point of departure was that while the theory of imperialism explained the antagonism between the bourgeoisies of different countries, this could not explain why the proletariat got infected by aggressive nationalism. His analysis complicated the issue of proletarian internationalism through the introduction of the concepts of exploiter and exploited nations, thus blurring boundaries between nation and class (Harding 1996). What he came up with was that sections of the working class in the imperialistic countries benefited from their capitalists' monopoly position in the world market, and this led to the labour movement's support in the war. Bukharin (1917), dealing with the same problem as Lenin, argued that there is a tendency in capitalist economies for workers to identify with their employers due to the argument that if business runs well, the workers are rewarded. This also goes for the exploitation of workers in other countries, as this entails a possibility that the extra profit gained will lead to increasing wages. Both of them recognized that a 'national interest' exists, if only for prosperity, and that nationalistic sentiments among the working class have a material basis (Brewer 1990).

Another way of looking at imperialism, that is, not through the lenses of monopolies or territorial expansion, is Emmanuel's (1972) theory of unequal exchange. Imperialism is here conceived as occurring through trade between countries with different levels of productivity. His key assumption is that while goods and capital are internationally mobile, labour is not, and consequently, prices and profit rates are through competition equalized internationally, while wages are not, hence causing gross exploitation. Following Marx, it may be argued that the high

productivity of labour in core countries produces more value within a given time span than lower productivity labour in the peripheral countries (Brewer 1990). Thus, when a product which is the result of one hour's labour in a core country is exchanged for the same product requiring a great deal more labour in the periphery, the exchange is unequal. Emmanuel's analysis specifically considers the consequences unequal exchange has on the international solidarity of workers (Larrain 1989). Although I will treat solidarity at length in the next chapter, I will analyze some of the consequences of this train of thought on internationalism in this chapter. However, while Lenin and Bukharin recognized that class struggles in core countries had been weakened through reforms made possible by using the superprofits provided by imperialism, they had restricted the bribery to the upper stratum, which they called the labour aristocracy. Denying finance capital access to the superprofits would end the corruption and thus restore the revolutionary fervour of the working classes in the core countries (Harding 1996). There are similar arguments in explanations of more recent day depoliticization of labour movements particularly in the core, claiming that improved working conditions brought an embourgeoisment of the workers (Eder 2002). This can be seen in for instance the militancy of labour organizations, and also in their view of the relation between labour and capital. In giving me an account of a dispute within a company having operations in both a core country and a semi-peripheral country, one of the officials in the ITGLWF talked about how the militancy of the union from the latter scared the initiative out of the union from the former. In addition, the delegate from Sri Lanka criticized Western unions for too often opting for the 'social partnership' strategy, characterizing it as "asking the leopard to change his spots". He also criticized Western trade union leaders for not being able to liberate themselves from the capitalist way of thinking – they are children of capitalism and they thus do not have the proper grasp of the real causes of misery:

You lot, you all belong to capitalist societies, so your ideology, your whole outlook, is that of people who live in a capitalist society.

Returning to Lenin, it can be claimed that he placed the impetus for world revolution with the peripheral workers, as their struggles would diminish the profit and thus awaken the workers of the core countries from their enchantment. An anti-imperialist struggle in the periphery would inflict a crisis upon imperialism, which would in turn lead to a revolution in the core spreading to the periphery. Although the crisis of imperialism and the instigation of a revolution are debatable, the introduction of a post-Fordist regime of accumulation and lean production might have altered workers' consciousness of the core countries (Moody 1997). Emmanuel (1972), in a similar vein as Lenin, argues that the antagonism between classes in core countries has been displaced by an antagonism between rich and poor nations, thereby depressing the revolutionary consciousness in the masses. However, it is not as much opportunistic leaders holding back this consciousness as it is a growing awareness on part of the masses that they belong to a privileged exploiting nation. Emmanuel assumes that the rate of exploitation is lower in the core countries than in the peripheries, and that the workers of the core countries have become aware of this fact. This was not agreed upon by the official I interviewed in the ITGLWF:

[I]f I think about, for whatever historical period, the thousands of workers, say in Europe, who toiled in the respective textile, clothing and footwear sectors, whose jobs don't exist anymore, would at one point, let's say 50s and 60s - they didn't know what imperialism meant. They wouldn't have an understanding [...] as far as they were concerned it was a job [...] People don't go home and then say "Oh, I've just been engaging in an economic activity that really contributes to the circuits of imperialist economic activity in the world, or the capitalist activity in the world".

Emmanuel nevertheless maintains that when the relative importance of the national exploitation, from which also the core proletariat suffers, diminishes continually as compared to the benefits accrued through belonging to a privileged nation, a moment comes when the aim of increasing the national income in absolute terms prevails over that of the relative share of capital and labour. Henceforth the principle of national solidarity ceases to be challenged, and as Emmanuel (1972:180) puts it: "a de facto united front of the workers and capitalists of the well-to-do countries, directed against the poor nations, coexists with an internal trade-union struggle over the sharing of the loot". This internal struggle, however, degenerates from a militant trade union struggle, through corporatism, to racketeering, and the workers of core countries now hold frontline positions in defence of national interests. Emmanuel (1972) goes on to employ Lange's concept of 'people's imperialism', and quotes Myrdal on popular movements claiming that while they in the past were imbued with internationalism, they have now become narrowly nationalistic. This can be linked to the occurrences of trade union imperialism in the past, where the example of the American Institute for Free Labor Development's involvement in Latin America during the Cold War is one of the more prominent examples (Munck 2002). Emmanuel (1972) even puts it as frankly as when wages are assumed to be the cause of external exploitation through imperialism, the initiative is held, either consciously or unconsciously, by the working class. This is so because the proletariat's demands are the driving forces for world economic antagonism, and international workers' solidarity is thus rendered a historical misconception. However, on the other hand, he admits that if you turn the equation the other way around, and hold external expansion as the cause of wage differentials between classes, the gain the working class can draw from this expansion is left subsidiary and subordinate. Herod (1997:17-18 *passim*, emphasis in original) is not a far cry from Emmanuel's argument in his preoccupation with theorizing labour's agency in the creation of spatial fixes: "Workers often succeed in constructing landscapes in certain ways which augment their own social power and undercut that of capital [...] [E]ven when workers pursue spatial fixes which are beneficial to certain segments of capital, they do so as *active* geographical agents making space as part of their own very real political and economic goals". Again reference is made to the American involvement in Latin America during the Cold War: "I suggest that in its role as handmaiden to US capital, the US labor movement played a crucial role in bringing about the underdevelopment of Latin America and so of shaping at the international scale the geography of capitalism" (Herod 1997:19). Emmanuel has been seriously criticized by Marxist authors mainly because of his focus on exchange and not on relations of production (Larrain 1989). One of the most articulate of them is Bettelheim, and his critique is included in the appendix of Emmanuel's

book *Unequal Exchange* (1972). Bettelheim objects, among other things, to the notion that underdeveloped countries are 'exploited'. Exploitation entails the extraction and appropriation of surplus value in production by the bourgeoisie. Thus, the working class of core countries cannot be the exploiter of peripheral countries. In fact, Bettelheim even maintains that workers in the core countries are technically more exploited than their counterparts in poor countries due to their productivity resulting in a relatively higher surplus value extraction. This can also explain one of Emmanuel's problems; given the free mobility of capital between countries, and that exploitation is higher in the periphery, why should there be any investments in the core at all? Further, Bettelheim expresses worries as regards the nationalistic interpretations which Emmanuel's theory might engender; the national bourgeoisie of underdeveloped countries might try to convince the working class that their poverty is due to national exploitation and not class exploitation (Larrain 1989). This claim would make the capitalists, the proletariat and the peasants in the periphery all victims of the same enemy, and emphasize their commonality of interest.

Amin (1977) deals with the same problem and tries to accommodate the view of Emmanuel and Bettelheim. For starters he alters the definition of unequal exchange by increasing the emphasis on productivity; unequal exchange involves the exchange of products whose production involves wage differentials greater than those of productivity. In other words, there is an opening for peripheral countries, using the same advanced techniques as similar sectors in core countries, to still pay less to their workers. This mismatch between wages and productivity has in much of neo-Marxism been termed social disarticulation. Regarding the question of the exploitative alliance of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the core versus the anti-imperialist alliance in the periphery, Amin does not agree. Neither does he agree with Bettelheim's contention that core country workers are more exploited, as this ignores the fact that exports from the periphery might come from high productivity sectors. Nonetheless, if peripheral workers are more exploited and there is thus a transfer of surplus, this does not lead him to the conclusion that core country workers benefit from it. Amin (1977) in other words displaces the issue of class struggle from its national context to the international. This is so because while there exists an organic relation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in core countries, that is, the social articulation characteristic of Fordism, this is not true of the periphery (Larrain 1989). Consequently, due to the fact that the bourgeoisie of core countries exploits the peripheral proletariat, the class struggle has to be located at the international level and no longer at the national. In his newest publication, Amin (2003) argues that the imperialism we are witnessing today is victimizing not only the peoples of the peripheries, but also, through the subjection of all societies to the maximization of profits, the wage workers of core countries. Issuing from this analysis is the proposed strategy of a global front, consisting of dominated classes and peoples in both North and South, against international and social injustice. However, Amin also visualizes the building of an anti-imperialist common front among the peoples of at least Asia and Africa. This raises the issue of whether 'nationalism' can be progressive in some instances, and Marxist debates on internationalism also deals with the question of how to treat parties which simultaneously support nationalist and socialist demands (Hobsbawm 1990). Perhaps nowhere has this question been more at the

forefront than in the colonial struggles. While Luxemburg (1915) opposed any struggle with nationalistic sentiments, Lenin maintained that due to the uneven development there was a need to take on a more nuanced view on national movements (Harding 1996). While nationalism in the most advanced capitalist countries is indeed reactive and a thing of the past, in those corners of the globe where capitalism is still in its youth, nationalism can be much more progressive in that it is anti-imperialistic. Lenin's (ref. Hobsbawm 1990) contention that the liberation of oppressed colonial peoples was an important potential asset for world revolution, paved the way for communist support of these struggles.

With the passage from imperialism to Empire as their point of departure, Hardt and Negri (2000) recognize substantial effects on workers' unity. Although they maintain that workers have, since the 1960s, had a potential or virtual unity, this was never materialized in a global political unity. They thereby claim that the few and scattered instances of international organization were less important than the fact that struggles started to coincide and overlap, despite their diversity, due to being directed against the same international regime of capital. Hardt and Negri term this an 'accumulation of struggles', and maintain that it undermined the capitalist strategy depending on the creation of a labour aristocracy through the hierarchies of the international division of labour spoking the wheels of a global unity among workers. In other words, during the transformation from imperialism to Empire, although international divisions of labour remained, the advantages attained by national working classes through imperialism withered away. The difficult situation facing workers in core countries was recognized by the two delegates from the Dominican Republic:

I want to add, that what is going on, the threats the workers of the world have, somehow, although the richer countries had moved on from some of the problems, the threats are the same that poor countries also have. The workers of poor countries have got used to live under these conditions [...] In the case of Germany, a country where the workers have been organized for long time, today the rights of these workers are under threat too. A fellow from Germany was explaining to us about the situation there, a country that is developed and industrialized. That is an example of what could happen if the rich countries do not join the struggle of poor countries and support the work we are doing in poor countries. Tomorrow this will have consequences up there. The threat is not only over the unionists of countries like the Dominican Republic, this threat could arrive in rich countries also.

The combined threats of relocation, lean production and unemployment have brought worker rights in core countries under attack, and the German example he is referring to involved the prospect of losing the right to collective bargaining. A German delegate also pleaded for solidarity action at the Congress around this issue. The proletarianization of workers in the periphery, and their subsequent organization, also took away the colonial strategy of transferring crises and the class struggle from the centre to the periphery by shifting the economic pressures to a more controlled terrain (Hardt and Negri 2000). In light of converging struggles against the capitalist regime, the authors furthermore herald the end of the division between the First and the Third World, and they consequently see a potential for political integration of the entire global proletariat. This convergence brings with it an increased possibility for cooperation and possibly

the formation of a revolutionary organization, thereby actualizing the formerly *virtual* political unity. Further, they contend that the accumulation and convergence of struggles render the proposition of many dependency theorists about the main antagonism of the international capitalist system being between the capital of the First World and the workers of the Third World, useless.

THE WORKING CLASS - A SLEEPING GIANT?

[T]he experts proclaimed the working class a thing of the past. The diagnosis read: paralysis due to globalization, fragmentation, flexibilization. A deteriorative disease was said to have rendered this once combative social class too weak to survive the dog-eat-dog world of lean and mean transnational corporations and trimmed-down states [...] Like Mark Twain's proverbial death notice, the diagnosis proved premature.

(Moody 1997:9)

What is the working class?

There are today approximately three billion wage workers employed by about 50 million capitalists worldwide (Castree et al. 2004). Although their wages and conditions might vary greatly both within and between countries, they have one thing in common; they sell their capacity to work over an agreed period of time, that is, their labour power.

Marx and Engels wrote in 1848 that all thitherto societies had had their class struggles between the oppressor and the oppressed. Their analysis thus centres on how the relationships between humans are shaped by their relative positions in regard to the means of production and power. What sets capitalist society apart from earlier ones, is the simplification of the class antagonisms. While there in earlier epochs was a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, the onset of capitalist society saw, according to Marx and Engels, a polarization into two hostile camps; the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In addition, the unveiling of the religious and/or political illusions made exploitation more naked and visible. One of the defining characteristics of capitalism is the purchase and sale of labour power, and thereby the generalization of three conditions throughout society; first, workers are separated from the means of production, second, they are freed from any legal constraints and thirdly, the purpose of employment is the expansion of a unit of capital belonging to the employer (Braverman 1974). The worker thus enters into an employment agreement because social conditions leave him/her no other option. In order to open the union members' eyes to this fact, the delegate from Sri Lanka told me what he used to ask them:

I put the question to them: 'Do you live to work for this company that employs you, or do you work for this company in order to live? Which is it?' [...] Usually they give the correct reply. You don't live to work for the company, you work for the company to live. So if you can live without the company, we bloody well be without the company! So that's the way you get them to separate their mind from the company.

In the imagination of working individuals, they perceive themselves as freer under bourgeois rule due to the seemingly accidental conditions of life (Marx 1845). In reality, however, Marx claims that they are less free, because they are more subjected to the violence and turbulence of the system. The bourgeoisie has rapidly improved the instruments of production, and through major developments in the means of communication, it is trying to quench its thirst for an ever expanding market by extending internationally and creating a world in its own image. This has

created the inter-dependence of nations mentioned above. However, Marx and Engels liken the bourgeoisie to a sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the world he has created with his own spells. Capitalism is with its relations and means of production crisis prone, especially due to overproduction. The crises are in the short term superseded by destruction of productive forces and by conquering new markets and/or deepening old ones. Thereby, it was held, the bourgeoisie was paving the way for more extensive crises and running through the means whereby crises are prevented. What Marx did not foresee was the Keynesian demand-side policies in which workers were perceived as important consumers, leading to an articulation between productivity and wages. Overproduction is not, however, the only problem facing the bourgeoisie: “[N]ot only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians” (Marx and Engels 1848:226). The working class has to work in order to live, and they are able to find a job only as long as their labour increases capital. The workers must sell themselves piecemeal in a fashion resembling commodities, and are thus exposed to the competition and the fluctuations of the market. Numerous authors, among them Castree et al. (2004) and Peck (1996), have, however, noted the difference between ‘true’ commodities and labour power. They call labour power a ‘pseudo-commodity’, due to its sentient character as it embodies living and conscious human beings. This has three implications: firstly, workers are only temporarily commodities, as they only sell the power to labour over an agreed period of time; secondly, they have agency; and thirdly, they enter into a social relationship with the employer (Castree et al. 2004). As any commodity, the price of labour is equal to its cost of production, that is, the costs of reproducing a worker. And, instead of rising with the tide of industrial progress, the working class experiences immiseration, that is, gradually dropping behind in relative terms. What all wage workers have in common is their exposure to exploitation by capitalists. This is because: “the value of labour-power, and the value which that labour-power valorizes [i.e. creates] in the labour-process, are two entirely different magnitudes; and this difference was what the capitalist had in mind when he was purchasing the labour-power” (Marx 1867:300). That is, the value of workers’ wages is less than the value they produce. The workers are thus in theory united by their common enemy; the capitalists. Together with being united against this enemy in a fight for better wages and working conditions, Marx and Engels (1848) claimed that the proletariat is the only revolutionary class. This is because the other classes, such as the lower middle class, small manufacturers, shopkeepers and peasants, really only fight for their own existence, that is, they are conservative and sometimes reactionary. Marx and Engels thus maintain that as classes have come to power, they have sought to fortify their already acquired social status by constructing a society after their own image. The proletarians, however, have nothing of their own to fortify, and their ‘mission’ thus becomes to destroy the previous defence of private property. Marx (1845) states explicitly that separate individuals form a class only to the extent that they carry a common struggle against another class. And, in turn, the class achieves an independent existence in relation to the individuals, that is, the latter’s conditions of existence is

circumscribed (Marx and Engels 1848). If workers do not unite against their common enemy, they are often broken up by mutual competition due to the commodity character of labour.

Marx and Engels (1848) maintain that as industry develops, the proletariat's interests and conditions of life are more and more equalized as machinery obliterates task distinctions and the division of labour reduces wages. Castree et al. (2004) identify at least three common interests among workers by virtue of their position in the capitalist mode of production. The first pertains to their social and physical reproduction, as all workers need to earn a 'living wage'. Secondly, when survival is secured, they have a common interest in maximizing the benefits accruing to labour, such as wages, rights, entitlements and conditions. Finally, Castree et al. introduce the concept of inter-worker dependency, by which they mean that workers directly or indirectly depend upon each other for their jobs. That is, they depend upon each other both as producers within a firm, producers in different firms and finally as consumers.

In other words, it is the analysis of commodity production and exchange that reveals the existence of the two distinctive and opposed classes (Harvey 1999). In production, one of the classes appropriates the surplus value and seeks profit through exchange, taking on the role as capitalists. The other facilitates this appropriation through giving up their surplus labour, and hence takes on the role of worker. In *Capital* Marx (ref. Harvey 1999) treated both classes as personifications of the economic relations existing between them, and explicated the social, moral, psychological and political implications of this two-class social structure. However he recognized that social classes are composed of individuals, and that it is not always admissible to analyse on the basis of social classes. For instance since the sphere of exchange, which includes the buying and selling of labour power, is characterized by negotiations between individuals the question of individuality can not be overlooked. The relationship between the two classes is often conceptualized as both one of cooperation and conflict, or to put it another way simultaneously symbiotic and contradictory (Harvey 1999, Castree et al. 2004). The question Harvey asks is thus *when* it is appropriate to seek for the relations between whole social classes, and what the implications of individuality are. In answering this question he refers us to Marx' claim that beneath the surface of individuality entirely different processes go on in which the apparent individuality gives way to the compulsion arising out of competition. In *Capital* Marx puts it like this: "[L]ooking at things as a whole, all this does not, indeed, depend on the good or ill will of the individual capitalist. Free competition brings out the inherent laws of capitalist production, in the shape of external coercive laws having power over every individual capitalist" (Marx 1867:381). One of these laws is 'accumulation for accumulations sake', also binding the capitalists together as they have a common interest in securing the conditions for progressive accumulation (Harvey 1999). The competition compels individual capitalists towards using a labour process that is at least as efficient as the social average. It is in the situation of increasing the exploitation of workers, either through absolute or relative surplus value, that Marx maintains that it is necessary to analyse the relationships between whole social classes. Due particularly to rising productivity, which often makes a number of workers unemployed, the individual worker tends to succumb to the capitalists' drive to accumulate. Hence, a collective resistance among workers, taking the form

either of spontaneous acts of sabotage or the creation of organizations, is required. This, however, also compels the capitalists to constitute themselves as a class, together with the need to ease the contradiction between individual capitalists' own self-interest and the aggregate interests of the class as a whole. Applied to the current situation in the textile and garment industries, it makes sense to analyse them in terms of two opposed classes, as deregulation through the phasing out of the MFA will bring a greater opportunity on part of capital for increasing absolute surplus value by shifting production to where the costs involved are lowest. Workers, on the other hand, are opposed to this as it will both entail employment instability, a loss of bargaining power due to the threat of relocation and the ensuing pressure on terms and conditions of work. The two-class structure is here applied to the global level and the appropriateness of upscaling it will be discussed below.

Castree et al. (2004) identify some deep-seated social and geographical similarities between wage workers. First of all, the act of selling labour power has social implications regarding physical and social reproduction, for instance feeding, clothing, sheltering and socialization. Secondly and geographically, all workers live and work in place, and they are often conceptualized as the most place-based factor of production. However, this similarity of living and working in a 'local world' also contributes to a geographical differentiation of workers, which I will return to. Thirdly, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, workers are increasingly interdependent, meaning that actions or inactions in one place may have implications for workers elsewhere. There are thus the dual mechanisms of geographical differentiation and interdependence impacting on workers' solidarity.

Solidarity

Although the word solidarity is often considered as a personal attitude and is conflated with empathy and altruism, it has its roots in the Latin word *solidus* meaning solid, whole and in common, later being adopted in Old French as *solidaire* meaning interdependent. The dictionary definition of solidarity is thus: "A union of interests, purposes, or sympathies among members of a group; fellowship of responsibilities and interests".⁴ The importance of laboursing these two definitions to attention is that the first and common definition implies a contradiction between solidarity and self-interest, while the definition found in the dictionary does not. From personal communication with John Stirling⁵, Head of the Division of Sociology and Criminology at the Northumbria University, I learned that he does not see any contradiction between solidarity and pragmatic self-interest. In his opinion, people in general start out from self-interest, for instance when workers join a union, they do so in order to better their own conditions. However, once they have become organized and go through trade union education and the like, they start building a wider picture of their own self-interest. Each worker thus realizes that what is happening to *me* is

⁴ <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=solidarity>

⁵ Stirling is also the co-director of the Work and Employment Research Centre. He has long standing research interests in workers and their organisations, and has worked directly with multinational companies and trade unions. He is for instance the co-editor of *European Works Councils: Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will?* (Routledge 2004).

due to global capitalism, and thereby that self-interest is not connected to for instance the national level. Consequently, they realize that their *interest* is to organize globally, since that is the only way to challenge global companies. In other words, Stirling's view is that global solidarities are built from the self-interest of workers. The important thing is to make the idealistic claims of solidarity concrete and practical, and in some cases challenge union members' perceived self-interest when they are not in accordance with their 'real' self-interest. In what follows I will delve more deeply into what makes this transition from pragmatic self-interest possible.

From the abovementioned theories of Marx a notion is often derived of a unity among workers due to commonality of interest. This, in turn, rests on at least three foundations. First is the assumed transformative role of the proletariat as they have 'nothing to lose but their chains' and 'a world to win' (Marx and Engels 1848:258). Secondly, due to the division of labour and the mechanization as it involves a degradation of skills and a homogenization of the working class. Finally, the commonality of interest would foster class consciousness, especially as workers realize the inefficiency of particularistic struggles and are thus persuaded to organize comprehensively as a class (Hyman 1999). Regarding this last point, the distinction between the class *in itself* and *for itself* becomes important, as interests have both an objective and a subjective dimension. The importance of this distinction derives from the notion that even though a class exists in relation to another class, that is, a class *in itself*, it does not automatically constitute a class *for itself* (Arrighi et al. 1989). Hyman (1999) substitutes these concepts for the terms objective class and subjective consciousness, and it is possible to term the first one 'socio-structural' and the latter lived and experiential (Castree et al. 2004). The objective element of solidarity is hence interdependency, but this condition is not as important for labour internationalism as the willingness to act on its basis, which constitutes the subjective element. The defining criterion of a class *for itself*, or subjective consciousness, is that the class makes conscious claims on part of its members. What the distinction explains is why, in the presence of a theoretical class interest, there might be absence of collective class action. However, Arrighi et al. also maintain that the very activities of groups serve to change them substantively and substantially, using the analogy of a multicoloured wheel – spinning the wheel at an accelerating pace, one will reach a point of speed where the wheel appears to be pure white. At once the speed is decelerated, however, the white will dissolve into its component range of colours. The distinction between a class *for itself* and *in itself* is thus useful in so far as it reminds us that the consciousness of classes is not a constant but a variable. Arguments about growing class polarization are thus referring to each class *in itself*. Whether this polarization gives rise to antagonism depends upon solidarities and thus the constitution of a class *for itself*. However, as Castree et al. (2004) point out, these two aspects of classes do not neatly overlap, as there is no guarantee that people will start identifying themselves with a class. Rather, a class *in itself* is internally fragmented, which is one of the reasons why the class tension does not constantly erupt into outright conflict. Braverman (1974), on the other hand, distinguishes between the absolute, long-term relative and short-term relative expression of class consciousness. In its absolute expression the consciousness of workers is pervasive and lasting attitude based on their social position, while the long-term expression is manifested in traditions and organization. It is

the short-term expression which offers dynamism, as it designates the mood and sentiments of the class as they follow the ebbs and flows of working conditions. Braverman maintains that the three expressions are interrelated and that while a class cannot exist without some degree of consciousness of commonality its manifestation varies to a great extent and is subject to manipulation by other classes.

Hyman (1999), after having identified the three basic foundations of the concept of solidarity, offers a rehearsal of the critique. First of all, he claims that the thesis of homogenization rests on a unilinear reading of the development of capitalist labour processes – in reality, new differentiations arise as old ones wane. Secondly, the idea of an objective class unity conflates the abstract, that is, the structural relationship between capital and labour, with the concrete, constituting the actually existing class relations in a location. This is related to the distinction made by Harvey (1999), which I mentioned in the methodology chapter, between class as it is understood in the formal and abstract analysis of capitalism as a mode of production and in the more concrete analysis of a social formation. And finally, the abovementioned distinction between ‘objective’ class and ‘subjective’ consciousness, and the linkage between the two, are inadequately theorized. Eley (1990) argues that building solidarity has to bridge a series of particularistic loyalties and interests as workers, in the sphere of subjective consciousness, have no *essential unity*. Furthermore, he maintains that every analysis of working class politics ought to with this discrepancy between the objectively unifying and subjectively fragmenting tendencies within the class as a whole. Returning to Hyman (1999), he seems to operate with a different conception of solidarity than the dictionary definition given above, as he claims that in the absence of differentiation, there would be no need for solidarity. As the title of his article also implies, he views solidarity not as a condition, but as something to be built. This view corresponds to the view of other academics, such as Castree et al. (2004), arguing that due to a multitude of worker identities, inter-place solidarity has to be actively constructed. In a previous article, Hyman (1992) also argues that if history has taught us anything it is that there are no short-cuts to workers’ identification and definition of interests in a solidaristic manner; it requires campaigning and efforts to upkeep the unity of the working class. And despite both a lot of effort to translate global solidarity into a practical reality, and some optimism as to the results, the General Secretary recognized in his activities report that this is often easier said than done, referring to the inclination of national trade unions to put national interests before global worker interests. The closest Hyman comes to an explicit definition is: “Solidarity is a project to reconcile differences of situation and interest, to offer support and assistance to the claims of groups and individuals irrespective of immediate advantage in respect of one’s own circumstances” (Hyman 1999:99). If solidarity is regarded as *something to be built*, the notion of consciousness as a fixed and passive attribute possessed or not by workers becomes inappropriate (Fantasia 1988). Fantasia, writing about the class consciousness in the US, criticizes sociological literature for measuring the attitude of individual workers as if his or her views are fixed and that collective consciousness equals the sum of these fixed opinions among individuals. In his view, this misses out on the collective dynamic in class consciousness as it is expressed in the midst of collective action. Fantasia’s

argument is not that neither individual attitudes nor collective interaction represents ‘true’ consciousness, but that both have to be taken into account. To substantiate this argument he uses a quite convincing example from a Vauxhall plant in Luton, England. A few days after a researcher had interviewed several workers and drawn the conclusion that ‘class consciousness was practically non-existent’, an eruption ensued involving rioting and the besiegement of the management. Hence, he maintains that in the study of class consciousness, workers’ attitudes and understanding is abstracted from class practices, which is the only context in which they can be understood. Marshall (ref. Fantasia 1988) attempts to explain this bias by pointing to academics’ habit of believing in the necessity of encompassing society intellectually before changing it, although this is not confirmed by the history of class action. It is now necessary to return to Marx’ distinction between class *in itself* and class *for itself*, as Fantasia (1988) argues that Marx underlined the centrality of action and process in the translation of the one to the other. In the words of Marx (1847:unnumbered, ch. 2.5): “Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into worker [sic]. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle [...] this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself”. Fantasia (1988) claims that the operative words in this passage is ‘struggle’, ‘united’ and ‘constitutes’, and that they ought to be considered as processes of class consciousness. He also argues that Marx bridged the cleavage between the materialism and idealism through introducing the intermediate conscious human activity. Objective conditions and subjective consciousness was therefore not conceived of as a dichotomy, but rather as dialectically related through consciously undertaken human activity. The exploitative character of capitalist society generates resistance, and in the common battle against capital their subjective consciousness is altered. Hence, according to Fantasia, Marx recognized the revolutionary potential of the working class not through its abstract ideology, but through its rebellious praxis. Solidarity is thus both created and expressed by mutual association regardless of any prefigured socialist society or ‘correct’ grasp of the class structure (Fantasia 1988). Analyses of solidarity and class consciousness should in other words be based upon action, organizational capabilities and institutional arrangements and the, through them, arising attitudes. An official in the ITGLWF held that:

[T]he real way that solidarity grows, and commonality of interest grows, it’s when you put workers in touch with each other.

The delegate from Bangladesh also stressed the importance of workers coming together under the same umbrella to better see what is to gain from joining forces:

They should come all together in unity and union strength and demand to get something. It will be beneficial - workers will be the benefited.

Barriers to solidarity and divisions within the working class

Returning to the Arrighi et al.'s (1989) analogy of the wheel, the working class is often conceived of as divided along several lines. Hence, it is widely acknowledged that although constituting a class, this is no homogenous group of people. Workers are of different nationalities, ethnicities, genders, generations, occupations, ideologies, religions and sexual orientations. And in addition to these differentiations comes the geographical unevenness of development, and hence living standards, both inter- and intra-nationally. I will deal with some of these divisions in what follows.

Nationality

How could it have been possible [...] to conceive of a real commonality of interest between, say, the industrial workers of Britain, and the miners and plantation workers of the colonial Gold Coast?

(Radice 2001:115)

First of all, and maybe most problematically, the class is composed of people from different nations in a world of uneven development. Having dealt with the issue of national barriers to internationalism in the previous chapter, I will not dwell on it here. As already shown, although most Marxists would agree that the common interests of workers in reality transcend national boundaries, most of them also acknowledge the difficulties posed by them. This holds for the general possibility of workers putting national interests before class interests, both due to perceiving national interests as self-interest and more to a respect mixed with fright for national companies. The impact this might have on international trade union solidarity, especially those engaging in collective bargaining and negotiations, was recognized by the General Secretary of the ITGLWF in a speech at the Congress:

You know, we see that some times when we try to engage in international solidarity, sometimes it is not easy to get the whole-hearted support of the union in the home country of the multinational concerned. That changes when you insist that everybody else should engage in international solidarity, but just not in this particular case.

The reverence to employers on part of trade unions in the Centre was also pointed out by the delegate from Sri Lanka, referring to Lenin's contention that the enemy is in your own country. Nowhere has this conflict surfaced more than in the theories of imperialism touched upon in the previous chapter. Here the issue of an alliance between workers and capital in the rich nations in the exploitation of subaltern nations was raised. Among the theoreticians stating this explicitly is Arendt (1961), although she writes mostly about what she terms *the mob*, what I interpret as quite similar to the term *lumpenproletariat* coined by Marx (1850). However, she also writes about "the possible bribing of sections of the working class with crumbs from the imperialist table" (Arendt 1961:104). Furthermore, she accuses Marxists of ignoring the lure of imperialist programs on the rank and file due to this being in obvious conflict with the doctrine of class struggle, and she uses the example of the serious blow dealt to international solidarity at the outbreak of WWI not disturbing Marxists' faith in the proletariat as such. However, as we saw in the previous chapter,

some Marxists tried to explain the events of WWI, and subsequent theorists of imperialism, such as Emmanuel (1972) and Galtung (1974), dealt with this issue. Galtung argues that it is necessary to conceive of a new approach to imperialism, due, among other things, to the fact that most analyses are based on only two classes, that is, those buying others' labour power, and those selling their own. Galtung maintains that this dichotomy has less and less bearing on reality as it becomes increasingly clear that the only clear cut positions in the class matrix is that of the wealthiest in the rich countries and the destitute in the poor countries. Basing his analysis instead on four classes, he employs Lenin's concept of labour aristocracy to delineate the working poor in rich countries and, though not ascribing it any specific term, recognizing the wealthy in the poor countries as ambivalent in a fashion resembling what other neo-Marxists have termed *comprador* bourgeoisie (for instance Amin 1984). Like many of the contemporary neo-Marxist writers, Galtung (1974) identifies the main source of revolt with the destitute in the poor countries, even though their potency is seriously circumscribed by the imperialist structures as they are manifested both inter- and intra-nationally.

Galtung (1974) has in his analysis of imperialism chosen the terminology of centre and periphery, using the concepts both in depicting geographical and socio-structural relations. Hence, the term 'centre' is used for both imperialist nations and the capitalists and ruling classes of all nations. Accordingly, the term 'periphery' accommodates both the subaltern nations and the working classes. By making combinations of these two terms and capitalizing the geographical delineation, the four classes in his analysis is termed centre-in-Centre (cC), centre-in-Periphery (cP), periphery-in-Centre (pC) and periphery-in-Periphery (pP). With these class categories as his point of departure, he depicts the concurrence of interests in the following figure:

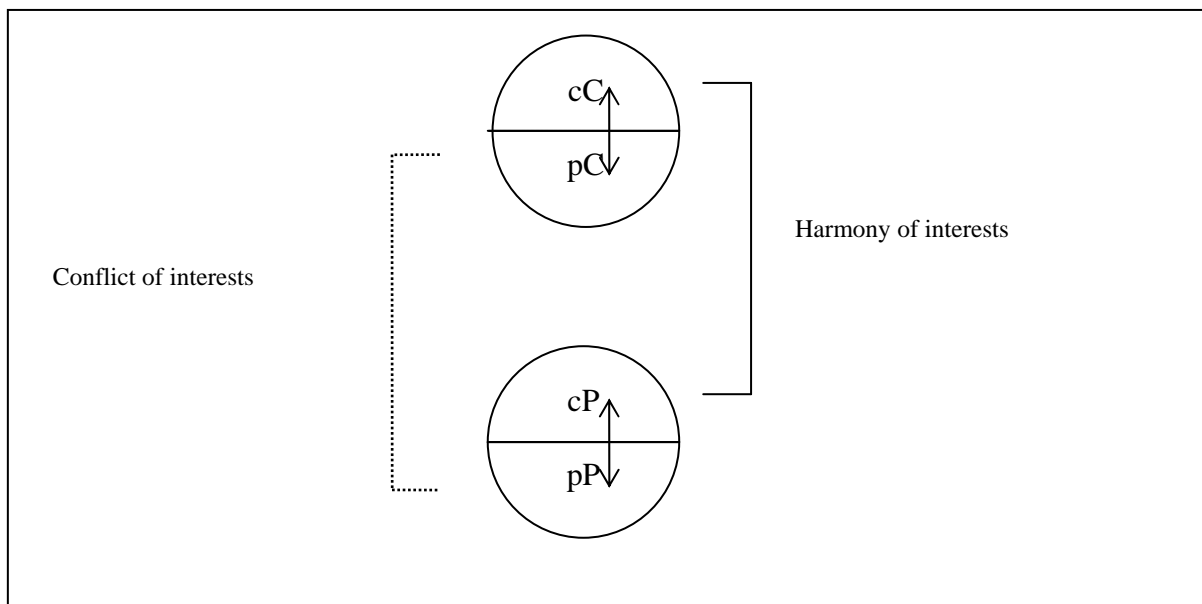


Figure 2: Galtung's (1974) depiction of centre-periphery relations

The figure illustrates that the capitalists in the imperialistic countries have common interests with the so-called comprador bourgeoisie in the underdeveloped countries and vice versa, while the

workers in the two categories have conflicting interests. Galtung regards international organizations as a medium where the two centres come together and develop a harmony of interests. This harmony has to be built by the centre-in-Centre, however, and Galtung uses the analogy of building a bridgehead through at least three phases all of which involves the centre-in-Centre controlling the centre-in-Periphery. At first this control was exerted through physical presence through occupation, while he claims that the last phase is characterized by the gradual establishment of international organizations. It seems to me that Galtung tracks the building of bridgeheads back to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in the Periphery, and hence to the centre-in-Centre establishing alliances with the nascent capitalist elites. The interests of the two centres become conflated with those of international organizations, and they start to define their identity in relation to these organizations, above and beyond ethnicity and nationality. However, since the Centres are more egalitarian societies, a bigger proportion of the population there will be interested in maintaining the current imperialist structure. The potential for the periphery-in-Centre joining forces with the periphery-in-Periphery in a common battle against the two centres is thereby thwarted due to conflicting interests, along with any notion of international solidarity except from the disguised 'trade union imperialism' discussed above. Galtung (1974) does acknowledge, however, the possibility of revolt in the Centre if the egalitarian society falters, and the periphery-in-Centre is no longer fed by the crumbs from the imperialist table, although he considers the probability for violent repression in the Centre as high.

What should be emphasized with regard to Galtung is, however, that he explicitly states his dissociation from economistic analyses, stressing the equal importance of politics, culture and communication. Although this might seem beside the point at first glance, it might also be the crux of the matter. In denying the precedence of the economic base, the objective basis of solidarity in the working class *in itself* ceases to be of primary importance, if existing at all.

Sectors

Capitalism is characterized by complex divisions of labour, both socially and technologically (Moody 1997). And capitalist economies are made up of several economic sectors, within which firms compete for market share. This competition breeds intra-class tension both among capitalists and workers, and also a plethora of different issues around working conditions (Castree et al. 2004). For workers, the technical division of labour increases the intra-class differences. Within workplaces and firms the different tasks are performed by different workers divided for instance into low- and high-skilled, resulting in a hierarchy of jobs. These differentiations matter both objectively and subjectively. In objective terms, the material conditions vary profoundly between high- and low-skilled jobs. Subjectively, occupation has an impact on people's sense of personal identity, and is part of the way people define themselves and others (McDowell 2003). This, in turn, has impact on the social status of different occupations. However, these divisions do not leave workers isolated at the workplace level. It is, on the contrary, in their interest to make formal links with other workers, most often through trade unions. The latter are, however, often based on different sectors and may thus, through what Hyman (1999) calls

compartmentalization, entrench the sectoral division within the working class as they define the common interests of their members in contradistinction to the workers outside the union. Especially the earliest unions were organizations of distinct occupations limited to the local labour market, and Hyman argues that normally the development of general unions, or multi-occupational unionism, with a broader geographical scope requires an active political class project or a gradual realization on part of workers of the limited efficiency of too narrow an action. The latter is in accordance with the view expressed by Bakunin (year unknown) upon founding the First International of the necessity of building of international solidarity from the bottom up through workers' experiences.

Ideology

One glance at the electoral results and the rates of trade unionization in most countries of the world is enough to remind us that the working class, constituting a majority, is no ideologically homogenous group. This brings us back to the distinction between class as an integral part of a mode of production and its manifestation in social formations once again, because the idea of a social formation opens up the possibility of diverse human practices (Harvey 1999). Lukacs (1920) acknowledges the difficulty in answering the problem of whether it is possible to make objective possibilities of class consciousness into reality as the project requires the overcoming of the fragmentation of the proletariat in time and space. Especially due to uneven geographical development and hence related to the above subchapter on nationality, symptoms of crises might appear separately, for instance according to country or branch of industry, the imprint of the crises in the consciousness of workers is fragmented. However, there are not only national or social gradations involved, the class consciousness of workers within the same strata might vary (Lukacs 1920). Living in a time in need of explanation why socialist revolutions had either been defeated or had failed to take place, Gramsci tried to rethink the relation between economy and ideology under capitalism (Forgacs 1988). An important argument was that economic conditions, such as a crisis, do not produce fundamental changes; they can only create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain strands of thought (Gramsci 1932-34). Regarding the consciousness of workers, Gramsci (1932-33) assumed that the rank and file has a practical activity amounting to an understanding of the world through its transformative potential, but no clear theoretical consciousness of this activity. Quite to the contrary, the theoretical consciousness might be in opposition to his or her activity, leading Gramsci to introduce the concept of a contradictory consciousness; one which is implicit in the activity and hence in common with every fellow-worker, and one verbal which is inherited from the past or uncritically adhered to. The latter often attaches workers to a specific group and it is powerful enough to create situations where the contradictory state of consciousness impairs action, decision and choice, thus producing political passivity. Lukacs (1920), counterpoising proletarian class consciousness to Marx' concept of 'false consciousness', holds that 'true' consciousness is neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by single workers, and that it has to be related to the whole of society and workers' objective situation. Harvey (1999) refers to 'false consciousness' as the gap

which exists between the daily experiences and what theory preaches. With capitalism, social conflict became reflected in an ideological struggle for consciousness with the two sides either striving for veiling or exposure of the class character of society (Lukacs 1920). In order to achieve hegemony the bourgeoisie had to embrace the whole of society and organise it in its own interests through developing a coherent theory of economics, politics and society for deceiving the other classes and suppress their class consciousness. In other words, they invest in ideological control and repression as a means to ease the threat conjured up by organized working class resistance, for instance through social expenditures (Harvey 1999). Even though the proletariat has bought into this masquerading, they have to overcome this 'false' consciousness since their economic situation commits them to a course of action not commensurable with it (Lukacs 1920). However, Lukacs holds that while the relationship between class consciousness and class situation objectively is very simple for the proletariat, the obstacles which prevent this consciousness are in practice greater. Harvey (1999) also argues that class consciousness is not forged by a sole appeal to theory, instead having its roots in the daily life and experience of work. The delegate from Sri Lanka emphasized the vanity of address workers with theoretical concepts:

I really often point out to intellectuals and intelligentsia that they don't grasp the outlook of workers. Workers think concretely, they don't think in concepts. Most of the middle class intelligentsia [...] they have concepts. Workers don't operate with concepts.

Shop floor struggles can provide a basis for more general political conflicts, but only insofar the fetishisms surrounding the political struggles are surmounted. Lukacs (1920) claims that the actual existing proletarian consciousness is divided within itself due to the reified relations of capitalism giving the impression of a diversity of mutually independent objects and forces instead of unity. One such division, capable of partly explaining the ideological diversity within the proletariat, is that between the economic struggle and the political one; the struggle to improve working conditions and wages might appear to be separate from the larger questions as to how society ought to be run. This division also relates to the separations of immediate interests from long-term objectives, and discrete factors from the whole. Regarding the discrete factors, the concrete situation with its demands is an integral part of capitalist society, and any immediate interests on part of the proletariat therein are based on capitalist logic. As the product of capitalism the proletariat is subjected to the reification of its creator. This was recognized by the Sri Lankan delegate:

[T]he working class doesn't have an ideology of its own, because they have been created by the capitalist class. So the ideology is really capitalist, and it's combating capitalists.

On the other hand, there need not be a contradiction between immediate interests and long-term objectives, as the former can be integrated into a holistic view and hence related to the ultimate goal of revolution. Still, if the two are not reconciled the fight for momentary interests might conceal what is the long-term goal, a catch often recognized with trade unionism and to which I will return in the next chapter.

Culture and identity

Castree et al. (2004) argue that capitalism does not exist in a social vacuum, and hence that class is deeply intertwined with other axes of differentiation than the capitalist-worker axis. The same authors term these axes ‘differences external to capitalism’, which I will refrain from doing as it is controversial to only pay heed to capitalism in its economic aspects and view culture as something external to it. Nonetheless, the influence cultural differentiations among workers might have on the employment relation, through the ranking of workers by employers and a subsequent matching of them with certain types of jobs, is recognized. It is thus necessary to consider both the ways in which the ascribed categories of identity are perceived by others, in this case employers, and by those who are marked by them. Regarding the latter, cultural axes of differences affect workers’ self-identity, and might thus influence the development of class consciousness, and hence, “[c]lass solidarity can [...] be diluted or challenged by non-class bases of identity and affinity” (Castree et al. 2004:55). A common critique of Marxist theories the last two decades has been what is often termed ‘identity politics’, being shorthand for movements advancing the slogan ‘the personal is the political’ and organising around gender, sexuality and ethnicity (Brunt 1989). It is often argued that the end of the Fordist era with its ‘mass’ aims and interest has rendered the reading off of individual interests from collective ones obsolete (Leadbeater 1989). Changes in the character of work have altered the unifying tendencies under Fordism, as the economic restructuring has brought deep divisions within the working class in its wake. Leadbeater argues that established identities and solidarities are dissolving as old demarcations, for instance between the skilled and the unskilled, are superseded by more fundamental divisions. Perhaps most importantly, the unemployed and the part-time temporary workers are separated from those in stable full-time employment. He also points out, like among others Hardt and Negri (2000) after him, the usual subsumption of the proletariat under the industrial working class, whose typical figure was the white, male, manual, unionised factory worker. McDowell (2003) even writes that under Fordism, paid work was the prime source of identity among men. With the advent of post-Fordism, work became flexible, destandardized, deregulated and individualized. The new regime of accumulation is also held to involve a bifurcation of the workforce, with the top segment getting high rewards and opportunities to construct ‘lifestyle identities’ through work on the one hand, and the less skilled experiencing increased insecurity and uncertainty at the other. Especially leisure and consumption is thought to have replaced work as the centre of life and meaning, and hence in the construction of identity (Bauman 1998). The abovementioned individualization of work is also thought to challenge existing social groups such as class, that is, individual performance will have a greater bearing on an individual’s position in the labour market than class or gender (McDowell 2003). In addition, the new work favours ‘do-it-yourself’ workers, hence making uniqueness and individuality attractive properties. The individualism is also giving the fragmentation a subjective element, as it is argued that workers nowadays are less solidaristic and define their interests individually or in terms of particularistic collectivities (Hyman 1992). Leadbeater (1989) argues that this requires

rethinking as female, white-collar, non- service sector workers now constitutes the largest group in the workforce of developed countries. In addition, he argues that consumption now occupies a central stage in the identities of people through choices of lifestyle. Against this, Fantasia (1988) argues that any conception of class as a social stratification, that is, a group of individuals assumed to have some shared social characteristics, must not be confused with the Marxist relational notion of class. In other words, the working class is not a group of individuals in possession of similar amounts of certain attributes, it is an exploitative and dynamic social relationship in which particular classes have no independent existence outside their relations to other classes. Regarding class consciousness, the 'culturalist' interpretation treats it as a distinctive way of life of the class, while Fantasia proposes to suspend the customary practices of daily life and instead focus on the behaviour during conflict and crisis. Hardt and Negri (2000) maintain that as the composition of the proletariat has transformed, it is necessary to change our understanding of it correspondingly. In their view, the working class has far from disappeared or ceased to exist, but its privileged position in the capitalist economy and its hegemonic position in the class composition of the proletariat have withered away. The proletariat is here defined as "a broad category that includes all those whose labor is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction" (Hardt and Negri 2000:52). The new figure of resistance is what they term the 'multitude', being "a multiplicity, a plane of singularities, an open set of relations, which is not homogenous or identical with itself and bears an indistinct, inclusive relation to those outside of it" (Hardt and Negri 2000:103). It seems to me that the lack of unity can partly be attributed to an inability on part of the multitude to identify the enemy against which to rebel. According to Hardt and Negri the identification of the enemy today is no small task as exploitation no longer tends to have any specific place. However, Callinicos (2003) argues that their concept of multitude is a compromise formation between the old theories of class and the postmodern theories of plural and shifting identities not anchored in production. With the concept of multitude, Hardt and Negri acknowledge, according to Callinicos, that different subjectivities can act in common despite pluralities and multiplicity.

Three notions of solidarity

In relation to the alleged globalization and the changes the working class has gone through recently, Hyman (1999) writes on what he terms 'Imagined Solidarities', admitting that it is open to at least three interpretations. At first glance it might be interpreted as meaning that workers' solidarity is illusory and unattainable. Reflecting more deeply on the word 'imaginary', however, can give rise to the second interpretation portraying solidarity as a utopia nonetheless capable of inspiring action. This could be married to Amin's (1996) positive utopias, by which he means changes in a direction to which current trends do not necessarily point, but where initiated actions might spur a virtuous circle in that direction. Another example of this second interpretation is nations as 'imagined communities'. The idea is that people may conceive a commonality with others without ever knowing them personally. The last interpretation Hyman offers, drawing on Durkheim, is that workers' diverse interests cannot be integrated mechanically, but requires

creative imagination. And it seems to me that it is the last interpretation which is the basis of Hyman's article, his argument being that any simple conception of mechanical solidarity has always been imaginary in the first sense. The second, more mythical form of solidarity may have had its historical role as source of inspiration, but that this has ceased to be the case. He thus maintains that any collectivism today requires new forms of strategic imagination, and workers' definition of interests is susceptible to being shaped by for example unions. Increasing heterogeneity within the working class resulted in a crisis of interest aggregation in the late 1980s, thus undermining the notion of a mechanical solidarity. Hyman thus concludes that in order to survive, solidarity needs to be rethought and reinvented in an organic fashion, and he proposes that solidarity be based on a flexible coordination of differentiated, and thus more interdependent, individuals. This project, Hyman argues, requires the recognition and respect of differentiations of circumstances and interests of the working class both within and between countries. To attain this it is important to redefine which interests should be represented, and to give priority to the construction of an agenda uniting rather than dividing workers, that is, focussing on discontents which generalize fragmented experiences. To what extent this redefinition amounts to a different type of solidarity altogether and not just new wine in old bottles is debatable, however. In the end, the abovementioned recognition of being united against a common enemy prevails: "the logic [...] is the reassertion of rights of labour as against the imperatives of capital. Many of the most effective interventions [...] represent partial efforts to articulate a new discourse of workers' rights" (Hyman 1999:111). In order to achieve organic solidarity, a high level of discussion, communication and understanding is required. As recognized by Marx and Engels in 1848, the means of communication created by modern industry offer workers great potential for establishing international contacts. This is all the more so after the development of information and telecommunication technologies. These means of communication can be used both in cases requiring urgency, such as campaigning, but also more routinely assisting the building of consciousness (Hyman 1999).

Solidarity as abstract principle and concrete reality

Workers are shaped by their direct experience, that is, broader identities are based on the direct and immediate. Solidarity implies the perception of commonalities thus extending, though not abolishing, the consciousness of particularistic circumstances (Hyman 1999). However, the need for new models of international solidarity requires a mobilization at the base, alongside stronger centralized structures. Again, this bears close resemblance to Bakunin's (year unknown: unnumbered) propositions that although a centralized body of more educated workers is important, "in order to overthrow and destroy the political and social order which now crushes us, it would be necessary to have the cooperation of [the] millions". This was also recognized by a German delegate to the 8th ITGLWF Congress:

[A]t times I have the impressions that we have more chiefs than we have troops and we cannot obtain solidarity just with chiefs, we need more troops.

(ITGLWF 2000:117)

This is further used as an argument for joining forces, avoiding splitting the working class into a plethora of different trade unions. Returning to Bakunin (year unknown), he also recognized that appealing to the masses would require an approach revealing tangible comprehension of their pressing problems in a concrete manner. In other words, workers stick to the logic of ‘facts’, and thus begin with this fact in order to arrive at the idea. Central sections of many workers’ organizations, on the other hand, have the idea as their point of departure, ascribing a secondary role to facts. Bakunin holds this as an explanation for the impotence of idealists, as also expressed by one of the officials of the ITGLWF:

[M]ost trade union internationalism was, well I can use a word like abstract, in the sense that it would be a gathering of people from different countries around an issue, and pious statements would be made and everybody would say, you know, ‘international solidarity’ and all give each other a hug, but in terms of getting some sort of sense of direction about where, what to do next and how to go forward, I always felt that people would just go away again and not a lot would happen.

The General Secretary made a similar remark at the 8th World Congress when asked about acts of solidarity since the last Congress:

The most effective forms of solidarity in that particular period have been situations where a union in one country involved in conflict has been able, through the ITGLWF, to secure the support of a union organisation, particularly in the host country of the company concerned. A number of problems have been resolved as a result of that sort of direct international solidarity.

(ITGLWF 2000:13)

It is important to take note of the past tense of the first statement, due to the common argument of the need to change the conception of solidarity. Hence, there is both a will to and a perception of change in the concept of solidarity employed in the ITGLWF. What this redefinition entails in the way of the ITGLWF’s action is a matter I will return to in subsequent chapters. It is thus necessary to speak to workers not of the general sufferings of the international proletariat, but of their particular and daily strivings, often in their sector of industry and locality (Bakunin year unknown). The same applies to the means, where proposing a strategy of international socialist revolution would only end up in paralysis and inaction. On the other hand, by proposing means of combating particular grievances, workers will come to realize that organizing solidarity solely at the local, or national, level will not be enough. What was emphasized time and again both at the ITGLWF’s 9th Congress and during interviews with officials, was the attempt at transforming solidarity into a practical reality. In accordance with Bakunin’s notion of building solidarity from the bottom up, the General Secretary is in a written report of the 8th Congress quoted as saying:

Global solidarity will have to be translated from being merely a glib phrase into a practical reality. But, global solidarity is meaningless unless we have national and local solidarity.

(ITGLWF 2000:22)

This connects to the opinions quoted above about the need to stop talking and start acting, but also the issue raised by the delegate from Sri Lanka regarding the need to address workers on concrete matters. Although solidarity in the dictionary sense of the term might be proven by science, Bakunin (year unknown) maintains that in the workers' life world it manifests itself as a mutual, profound and passionate sympathy.

Globalizing class polarization?

McDowell (2003) counters the alleged death of the proletariat by pointing out that at the start of the 21 century, the proletariat is larger than it has ever been throughout human history. Capital's penetration of every corner of the world is leading to an unprecedented proletarianization worldwide. And Radice (2001) argues that the globalization of capital is the globalization of labour, that is, capitalism's social relations, accumulation and class formation is globalized. Due to the dismantling of welfare states and the austerity programs recently embarked upon throughout the world, a larger number of people also depend more upon waged work for their material existence than they have done for years.

Taking global capitalism as a point of departure, researchers such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have claimed that the move beyond the nation-states also involves leaving class behind. This is contrary to the argument of Ruccio et al. (1991) that the tendency to de-emphasize, or in some cases to obliterate, class in analyses of global capitalism leaves out critical issues in the world today. In trying to rethink the relationship between class and the geography of capitalism, they start out by pointing to Marx' ambiguity on the issue as he wrote both of the tendency toward a world market inherent in capitalism, and the national starting point of the class struggle. Regarding the latter, however, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, it is often held that capital consolidated itself first at the national level, and the thought of labour mirroring capital with a time lag is not uncommon:

[C]apital acts and labour reacts. That's the essence to it.

Delegate from Sri Lanka

Marx (1865:unnumbered, ch. 12) demonstrates the same unfolding of events regarding the struggle for improvements in wages, the struggles are "reactions of labour against the previous action of capital". It would thus be less of a contradiction to claim both the tendency toward the world market and the national basis of the class struggle. This would also leave the Marxist tradition after Marx more comprehensible with its focus on imperialism, bringing the issue of power relations between nation-states to the fore at the expense of the class processes both within and between nations. Recalling Galtung's model shown above, this is illustrated by his assertion that the national class struggle is like Marx theorized, but not so internationally. Capital strives for, and capitalists have common interests in, establishing a world market, while workers, in Galtung's view, do not have common interests in fighting it back. He thus does not adhere to the view of labour conceiving a strategy similar in fashion to that of capital. This is not to say that class was not mentioned in this tradition, in most cases it was, but only that it was made secondary to other

processes. Another problem Ruccio et al. (1991) recognize with these approaches is their economism; the capitalist economy is regarded self-regulatory through its inherent laws. The economy is in other words regarded as a self-reproducing entity, which is, depending on where the underlying economic dynamic is recognized, either national or international. Ruccio et al. thus argue that economism reinforces the dichotomy between national and international in analyses of social actors.

In order to arrive at a global class analysis Ruccio et al. (1991) start out by developing concepts that incorporate important spatial and temporal dimensions of class. The authors use the term fundamental class process referring to the social process in which surplus labour is performed and appropriated. If necessary labour is the labour expended in order to reproduce the value of labour-power, and hence the worker, surplus labour is then the labour done on top of that, and through which the worker creates no value for himself/herself: "He creates surplus-value which, for the capitalist, has all the charms of something created out of nothing" (Marx 1867:325). Hence, it is surplus labour which entails exploitation. In spatial terms, the site of this fundamental class process is what Ruccio et al. (1991) term the 'industrial site', that is, the site where the production and appropriation of surplus-value takes place. What is important is that such sites, although constituted within nation-states, have a spatiality distinct from them, and hence, the fundamental class process is neither national nor international. The spatial dimensions of capitalist exploitation are thus rendered irreducible to geographical levels in global capitalism. This is not to argue that the wider social context within which these sites are located are not important, because they are in securing the conditions of existence of the fundamental class process. Some of the processes of the wider social context can occur within the same nation-state as the industrial site, while others originate from outside it. Returning to the issue of the exploitation of one nation by another, the important issue is whether the international flows of value represents an appropriation of surplus-value. Ruccio et al.'s (1991) opinion is to the contrary; as the production and appropriation of surplus-value occur simultaneously and at the same site, the appropriation of surplus value cannot occur neither at the international nor the national level, and does not take the form of a value flow between different nation-states. They explain the conclusions of among others Emmanuel (1972) with this conflation of class exploitation with international domination through power relations. Since they do not deny the uneven geographical benefits of capitalism, they propose to extend the class analysis in order to illuminate the relationship between class and international flows of value. The issue is not exploitation, they argue, it is the distribution of already appropriated surplus-value among capitalists, a process which they term the 'subsumed class process'. An example offered by Ruccio et al. is when a merchant capitalist purchases a commodity from the industrial capitalist at less than its value before reselling it at its value, thus appropriating a share of the surplus-value created through exploitation. The industrial capitalist accepts this since the purchase is important in shortening the time lost in the realization of profits. However, while the production and appropriation of surplus-value occurs at the same site, the distribution and receipt of surplus-value need not, and often do not. The spatial dislocation might involve any geographical level, and hence both intra- and inter-nationally. Capitalism is, according to Ruccio et al. (1991), multinational in two

senses. First of all because processes originating in one part of the world participate in constituting the fundamental class processes in other parts, and, secondly, because sites of exploitation exist within most nation-states today. Viewed in this way, self-contained nation-states or national capitalisms later becoming international, have never existed.

Considering the properties of global capitalism recognized in the background chapter, it is possible to maintain that the transnational capitalist class is not capitalists in the traditional Marxist sense (Sklair 2002). This is because the biggest players have no direct ownership of the means of production, but instead own the copyright to the brand name. However, Sklair's notion of the transnational capitalist class would still fit into the subsumed class process identified by Ruccio et al. (1991). Sklair recognizes five senses in which this class is transnational. First of all, the members of this transnational capitalist class are people from many countries, who, secondly, share global as well as local economic interests. That is, members of the transnational capitalist class see their own interests as best served by identification with the interests of the global capitalist system. Furthermore, they seek to exert economic control in the workplace and political control in domestic and international politics and ideology. Additionally, they tend to have a global rather than a local perspective on a variety of issues. And, finally, they tend to share similar lifestyles, such as patterns of luxury consumption. According to Sklair, the transnational capitalist class is composed of four fractions, each with its own area of operation; a corporate fraction encompassing TNC executives and their local affiliates, a state fraction, a technical fraction and a consumerist fraction composed of merchants and the media. The transnational capitalist class seems thus to encompass the international alliance recognized by among other Galtung (1974) and Amin (1984) between the capital of the centres and the comprador bourgeoisie of the peripheries. However, Sklair (2002) points out that an important difference is that the transnational capitalist class is not identified with any servitude to foreign capital. All its members identify directly with capitalist globalization. In other words, it is not the nationality of the classes that is the primary consideration of Sklair, it is their structural location in the system. The political practices are not, however, primarily conducted within conventional political organizations, but through networks and transnational political organizations, such as the World Economic Forum. On the other hand, the transnational capitalist class is often backed by powerful official bodies, such as the financial and foreign ministries of major states, and specialized agencies of organizations like the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and the United Nations. Although not using the term 'transnational capitalist class', both my informants and the speakers at the Congress tended to recognize the same bodies as opponents, that is, the transnationals and their subsidiaries, national capitalists, national governments, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO:

Exploitation is rampant in the textile, garment, leather and footwear sectors [...] It is happening because governments are unable or unwilling to enforce their own labour legislation. It is happening because employers are increasingly transnational corporations [...] with no respect for either the country in which they operate or the workers they employ.

(ITGLWF 2004a:7)

And regarding the phase out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, the General Secretary put the blame solely on the WTO in his activities report to the Congress:

And we've been attempting, with our affiliates, to impress upon governments the urgency of doing something, to impress upon governments the need to have this matter raised at the World Trade Organization, after all the World Trade Organization creates and establishes all of this, and has created this emergency.

It is, however, important to remember that the WTO is an inter-national organization, and needs a consensus before dismantling agreements. The relative strength of the transnational capitalist class can, however, best be seen in relation to the relative weakness of its counterpart, labour. Although the labour movement also has transnational organizations, like the ITGLWF, the difference in functioning and resources was recognized by the delegate from Sri Lanka in a speech to the Congress:

The opponent we face is, I think, global capitalism, represented by global capitalist corporations *and* the governments that assure those corporations through. They have strategies, they have *global* strategies, they have global meetings to plan out the strategies over several days. They don't meet once in four years or hold an executive board meeting once a year, they meet regularly and have contact with each other and they plan and arrange their strategies and platform.

The existence of a global working class is, however, debatable. Munck (2002) argues that if capital is seen as a social relation, then its global expansion will inevitably bring an expansion of the working class. He is more sceptical to the claims to a global labour market, though, even if he claims that there is a tendency in this direction, or what Radice (2001) terms a more integrated global labour market. The argument he employs for qualifying the claim to a global labour market is that although labour is more immobile than capital, the latter is not completely footloose. This will, however, depend upon to what extent the industry under concern is resource-based, capital-intensive and requiring large amounts of sunk capital investment. Recalling the properties of the textile and garment industries from the background chapter, it is more appropriate to talk of a global labour market in these industries than in for instance mining. The General Secretary of UNI, the Global Union Federation for services, post and telecommunication, media and entertainment and graphical workers, pointed to this characteristic at his Fraternal Greeting to the Congress:

Your industries have felt the full force of globalization and a footloose manufacturing process, where factories have been uprooted and relocated often thousands of miles to other nations.

In substantiating a thesis of class polarization, Sklair (2002) points first of all to the growing gap between the rich and the poor both within and between countries. He places particular emphasis on the deterioration of the economic position of many workers in the developed countries, as this is a less well-known phenomenon. In a similar vein, Moody (1997) claims that the old class conflict has been aggravated lately, as working-class incomes have slumped almost everywhere. The merit of the class polarization thesis is that it recognizes both increasing immiseration and

enrichment at the expense of the middle strata. That the two processes are interrelated was recognized by the Sri Lankan delegate referring to what he once said to residents of a wealthy neighbourhood in Mumbai:

‘Marx said long ago that capitalism will produce greater wealth at one pole and greater misery at the other’. I said: ‘You come from one pole, which is Malaba Hill, but Malaba Hill exists also with its counterpart, dialectical opposite, which is the slums. So the dialectic of one and the other are two sides of the same coin.

Although recognizing polarization, some would possibly question its class character. Sklair (2002:52) substantiates the claim to class process through arguing that it is the lack of economic resources which makes people poor; “[i]t is their relationship to the means of production, to capital in its various forms, that locks most of the poor into poverty, thus it is at its base a class crisis”.

Global solidarity in a post-Fordist economy

McDowell (2003), in reviewing literature, writes that Fordism entailed the loss of the ‘localness’ of workplace institutions and the building of national level industrial relations systems, thereby reducing regional variations in working conditions and wages. It was also a period of relatively secure employment, and it is not uncommon to talk of an embourgeoisement of the working class as workers adopted typically middle-class consumption habits. Furthermore, this implied shifting voting patterns and a reduction in industrial conflict. Fordism is, however, usually regarded as the golden age of proletarian unity and solidarity, a reading of the past that Hyman (1992) chooses to term ‘mythical’. Not only does he regard this reading as erroneous, but also as a barrier to a proper understanding of current labour movements.

Hyman (1999) argues that the type of solidarity constitutive of much of the twentieth century tended on the one hand to reflect the properties of Fordism, that is, the discipline and standardization involved in mass production, and on the other the differentiation prevailing at that time between those central to the production process and the more marginal within the working class. He thus links Fordism to an attempt at the mechanical solidarity mentioned above. In Western Europe the post-WWII era was characterized by relative job security, ‘full’ employment, legal support for workers and constraints on competition. Fordism, or what Hyman calls organized capitalism, thus helped establish trade unions as central agents in a tripartite system. However, the matrix of the Fordist mode of regulation was the regulatory capacity of the nation-state, with the labour market being more or less a closed system. Moody (1997) argues that the tripartism and corporatism characteristic of Fordism was a response from capital to growing working-class militancy, and that as soon as the capitalists reconciled themselves with the importance of trade unions, they created domestication of them as a new line of defence; “fitting them into the national family as one of the tame cats” (Draper in Moody 1997:118). This is now challenged by the competitive restructuring of national economies, and the rise of transnational corporations has undermined national industrial relations systems due to their potential

abdication from the role of being a part in negotiations (Hyman 1999). Further, the attraction to employers of a national bargaining in order to 'take wages out of competition' has eroded. As political regulation of capitalism increasingly is transnational in scope, power has also been shifting towards international institutions, constraining the actions of individual nation-states. On top of this comes the internal restructuring of many firms. While Fordism was characterized by large vertically integrated companies conducive to standardized and bureaucratic forms of collective bargaining, today's companies have been termed 'hollow'. The key elements of these corporations are externalization through subcontracting, legally differentiated subsidiaries and a decentralization of decision-making responsibility. In sum, this has introduced market relationships within what were traditionally the boundaries of the firm, thus setting the various sub-units in competition with one another endangering the status of unionized companies and workplaces. The outcome of this competition, encouraged by transnationals' ability to 'benchmark', can be a cumulative undercutting of regulatory standards both nationally and sectorally (Hyman 1999). Shanmugaratnam (2004) employs Bentham's work on the architecture of discipline and especially his penal surveillance system Panopticon to depict relations between transnationals and their subcontractors in the garment industry. The transnational buyers are situated inside the 'inspector's tower' being more or less an omnipresent 'Eye of Power', while the individual manufacturers around the globe are isolated in cells located in a circle around the tower. Due to the surveillance, these manufacturers are connected through a common discipline which is paradoxically caused by their mutual competition. When it comes to labour, the question is how workers will solve this prisoner's dilemma. As known in game theory the prisoner's dilemma illustrates the discrepancy between group and individual rationality; where, in a given situation with the two options of cooperation or defection, a group's members pursue rational self-interest they may all end up worse off than they would if all acted contrary to it. Through cooperation all stand to gain, but not as much as a cheater will gain if the others cooperate. If all parties decide to cheat each other, all will lose but it does not entail as big a loss as being cheated on. However, when it comes to workers, the question of gain through defection can be raised – the employment gained is acquired through undercutting of labour standards. Still, the issue of gaining or losing employment is a hot potato, as pointed out by an ITGLWF official when talking about the creation of European Works Councils:

[Y]ou talk up the notions of international solidarity and this is a historic moment, which it was, for the first time thousands of worker representatives were coming together, you know, within the same company – brilliant! But it wasn't long before the company would announce the closure of a factory and the relocation of the work to another country, and then just, you just sit there and watch international solidarity collapse before your eyes. The way it happens it just - it's all done on the basis of silence. The workers in the countries who are going to get the work, sit there and they don't say a word. And the workers who are losing are banging the table and shouting.

However, the General Secretary, while acknowledging this problematic, claimed that he had seen some improvements in affiliates' apprehension of gains and losses lately as volatility has increased:

[S]ometimes they were happy to see, or maybe relieved to see that the closure or the downsizing was taking place in another country and not in theirs. But I think there's a greater recognition today that, OK, even if the closure today is in country B next door, tomorrow it's likely to be here.

Here it is important to keep in mind the extra instability of the textile and garment industries, and hence perhaps also greater recognition of it than in other industries, and also the possibility of wishful thinking on part of the General Secretary. As India is projected as a country presumed to gain employment in the wake of the MFA phase out, I asked two of the Indian delegates about how they felt regarding this gain. The answer they gave seemed to justify the assessment made by the General Secretary:

Even in India some of the manufacturers in textiles are closing down their investments, but they are opening their industries in the Philippines, Malaysia and other countries [...] Even Indian manufacturers are going to China. So that means loss of jobs to India, but creation of jobs to China. After the phasing out of the MFA *some* of the manufacturers [...] will shift their production to India. There has been unemployment in developed countries, [...] later some developing countries will have to face challenges for maintaining the standard of wages for their workers.

But the challenge that relocations of jobs and the ensuing competition constitute to international trade unionism is not overcome in the twinkling of an eye. The other official I interviewed held that it needs to be overcome through global solidarity:

What *we* have to do, it seems to me, is to have a sense of solidarity and to recognize that whichever factory closes it's a disaster for the workers [...] If a factory has to close then we need to find ways in which the workers at the other factories can support those that are affected [...] So, that's what I mean by solidarity, and we need to, I think, pay less attention to national barriers, because, to be fair, the employers don't take much notice of national barriers these days. They see globalization as an opportunity, they don't have any commitment to any particular country, even the country of their birth. They might want to keep maybe Research and Development or Distribution Centre in their home country, but that's for profit reasons, not for any kind of patriotism or what have you. And they certainly are only too quick to shift production, if they can do it cheaper.

This quote both illustrates the need to raise the consciousness of workers, and the need for labour to develop new strategies to counteract transnational corporations and do away with the narrow focus on national borders and barriers. Implicit is also the assumption that the national outlook of previous eras was legitimate as long as labour was catered for through social articulation. Once this link disappeared, the rationale for paying heed to national interests was circumscribed. The changing face of industry under global capitalism also led the ITGLWF at its 8th Congress in 2000 to adopt an agenda for action titled 'Global solidarity in a Global Industry' dealing explicitly with the need to look beyond national issues and how to achieve it. In reporting the past four years of activities to the 9th Congress, the General Secretary was asked if the ITGLWF had delivered on the issue of building global solidarity. Although not being completely affirmative, the General Secretary saw some improvements especially in the field of a more equal footing:

Well, there's much greater global solidarity today than we have seen in the periods in the past. It is no longer parent solidarity from the industrialized world to the developing world, from the so-called rich to the so-called poor. One of the things that I'm pleased about over the last four years, is that we have begun to see unions in developing countries beginning to work and assist each other [...] I think there is developing a new type, a new form or new area of international solidarity. The solidarity between the newer producers, the newer producing countries as opposed to that old style solidarity which was essentially from the rich to the poor, and sometimes was a little paternalistic.

It seemed to me that attaining equality and avoiding imprinting Western ways of doing things on affiliates from the South was a major priority with the ITGLWF, thus rendering solidarity something more than raising money or sending educators to unions in underdeveloped countries. The issue also surfaced in an interview with one of the officials I interviewed:

Any initiative that tries to enable strong unions in the South to support their neighbours is always bound to be more effective than the old-fashioned style of trade unionists from Europe going and telling their colleagues in developing countries how best to do it. I mean, that's really an old sort of colonial style, which we need to see as something from the past, and really see ourselves much more as, if you like, a partnership of equals.

Returning to the issue of Fordism, what several authors have pointed out is the general lack of recognition concerning the temporal and spatial specificity of Fordism (for instance Moody 1997, McDowell 2003). Once Fordism is viewed in this light, it becomes easier to grasp the resemblance between the present mode of accumulation and the pre-Fordist ones, pertaining especially to the recent growth of homework, sweated labour and hostility towards workers' organization. This realization has led for instance Harvey (2000) to maintain that Marx' analysis in *Capital* has gained new relevance recently, and is the most accurate understanding of today's capitalism.

With the rise of transnational corporations, workers who formerly found themselves in production systems contained within their own nation increasingly saw part of this production being moved abroad. This did not only spell job losses, but also a threat to national bargaining systems and its previous achievements as capital relocated more and more production to lower-cost overseas units. The consolidation of cross-border production systems spanning the North-South divide at the same time unites workers through common employers and creates a basis for competition among them (Moody 1997). The new situation created by global capitalism was recognized by the delegates from India:

[N]ow we have very tough competition. Once we entered globalization, then we needed international solidarity.

On the one hand, relocation on the basis of wage gaps pits workers against each other, but on the other, the increasingly common employment in shared production systems also creates new ground on which to build solidarity and strategies. Moody (1997) regards the competition between workers in the North and South as a new phenomenon, but it may also be a token of more equal conditions. He maintains that despite the high risk of competition, there are also fertile grounds for common interests in reducing poverty; since a vast impoverished workforce

depresses wages, a perpetuation of poverty is not in the interest of workers anywhere, North or South. This was pointed out by one of the delegates from the Dominican Republic:

We have to think, we have to look through this blurry context in order to counter the oncoming deregulation. It is evidently a serious threat to the workers from rich as well as poor countries. They are placing us, the workers, in a competition for employment [...] - who starves faster their worker? This is something we must stop.

As both the other delegate from the Dominican Republic quoted in the previous chapter, and the General Secretary of the ITGLWF pointed out, the disappearance of long fought for privileges on part of workers in the North have begotten a situation more open for solidarity on an equal footing than during previous eras. The Dominican even expressed some degree of pity towards his brothers in Germany implying that they are now in the same boat, but that workers in the South are more used to the capriciousness of the sea. The advent of lean production, and the changes in the way work and production is organized therein, has affected workers both North and South, and has thus provided common experiences of the pressures and problems among the working class world wide (Moody 1997). In the words of a Dominican delegate:

[T]he 'International' should [...] continue to support the organizations of developing countries, and, I think, those of developed countries too. Mainly because we are facing the same problems. We have the same problems and therefore there should be coordination, and better and more efficient communication between the countries.

In addition, Moody (1997) argues that because most international trade now occurs between or within transnationals, capital has broken the link between mass consumption and incomes implied in Keynesianism. Hence, it is Northern capitalists trading with their counterparts in the South, and the surest way for them to become richer is to increase the exploitation of workers everywhere. Hence, while during the era of essentially national economic development workers were regarded as important consumers, today this link between production and consumption is, according to Radice (2001), significantly weaker as giant firms are not obligated to articulate the two, and labour is treated once again as a cost only. Harvey (2003), drawing on both Luxemburg's theory of imperialism and Hardt and Negri's extension of it, theorizes the response of capital to the crisis of expanded reproduction, or Fordism, since the 1970s. The extroverted imperialism based on primitive accumulation abroad has given way to *Empire*, in its turn based on what Harvey terms accumulation by dispossession both internally and externally. The dependence upon outsides to feed upon has been superseded by the active manufacturing of internal 'outsides' through dispossessing the masses of the crumbs previously given from the imperialist table. The delegate from Sri Lanka had this view of global capitalism and China's position therein:

We have today what is called a global market [...] With its huge manpower, resources and capacity for intensive production, China has become the world's manufacturer - 1.5 billion people. What is Europe? What is Sri Lanka and Bangladesh? They are only some millions. So from the point of view of the global capitalist production system, China is enough for them. So it's one huge non-union factory. So can you imagine for the global capitalist class - a global factory with a working population of hundreds of millions without unions and at low wages.

China is according to Harvey (2003) a major lever in the introduction of accumulation by dispossession as her opening up increases the pressures on working conditions worldwide through primitive accumulation. As seen above, the dispossession is worldwide, and the need to halt it was recognized by the former President of the ITGLWF in his presidential address to the Congress:

We cannot allow [...] the work of those pioneers of generations before to be lost on the back of grand multinational companies and exploitation of labour.

Regarding class consciousness, Moody (1997) finds ample evidence in the mass actions across the world in the 1990s for a renewed class perspective and a growing sense of anger within the working class, referring to Gallup polls showing the incidence of an 'us versus them' class consciousness. The sense of being on the wrong side of the bargain was portrayed by the delegates from India when asked about the impact of the MFA phase out, an event supposed to be beneficial to employment there:

[When] the globalization took place, we were certain that everything would be good. But it got worse to workers. Workers are always losers [...] Maybe in India, maybe in Pakistan - they are the losers [...] And we are the workers...

Munck (2002) also claims that as labour processes are increasingly part of integrated transnational networks, and corporations seek to devalue labour power, a competition ensues that also affects workers in the North. He thus argues that this process has even helped to break the national unity of US capital and US workers in pursuit of the imperial interest mentioned above as 'trade union imperialism'. This was recognized by one of the officials in the ITGLWF, even using the same example:

[T]he retailers and the merchandisers, even headquartered in the United States, they're not interested in helping the textile workers in the United States.

In a similar vein and recalling the theories of imperialism, Radice (2001) argues that as long as the mobility of capital was restricted, workers in the Centre could be persuaded that the geographical segmentation of the global labour force was in their interest. Increasingly, however, they are also at the mercy of the divide and rule tactics of mobile capital, and the subsequent intensification of the exploitation of workers everywhere. Hardt and Negri (2000), argue that imperialism subsumed all forms of production throughout the world under the command of capital, and hence created a *virtual unity*, in other word a class *in itself*, of the global proletariat, although it was never fully actualized as a *global political unity*, or class *for itself*. Hardt and Negri thus de-emphasize any actual and conscious international organization of labour, as they instead focus their attention on the *objective* coincidence of struggles against capital, or what they call accumulation of struggles. The capitalist strategy of 'divide and rule' prevalent under imperialism is losing force as the hierarchies of the international divisions of labour blocking the unity among workers are eroding. As

mentioned in this and the previous chapter, writers such as Lenin were bemoaning the existence of a 'labour aristocracy' identifying its interests with imperialism rather than with the workers in the colonies. Taking the decline of imperialism and its replacement by *Empire* as their point of departure, Hardt and Negri maintain that although strong international divisions of labour remains, the imperialist advantages of any national working class is withering away. In addition, proletarianization in the Periphery and the ensuing class struggle, coupled with the granting of independence to the former colonies, rendered the strategy of appeasing the combatants of the class struggle in the Centre by shifting the economic pressures to the Periphery obsolete. Hence, Hardt and Negri conclude: "By virtue of this convergence, the worker struggles throughout the domain of international capital already decreed the end of the division between First and Third World and the potential political integration of the entire global proletariat" (Hardt and Negri 2000:263). The task ahead would therefore be to transform this convergence of struggles into revolutionary organization and the actualization of the virtual unity. Any analysis holding the primary contradiction and antagonism to be between capital in the Centre and labour in the Periphery, such as Galtung's (1974) theory mentioned above, is according to Hardt and Negri now useless as it ignores the convergence of struggles across the world, in the Centre as well as in the Periphery.

In the ITGLWF it seemed as though the phasing out of MFA constituted a ground on which to identify a commonality of *problem* across the North-South divide. The delegate from Mauritius stated explicitly that international solidarity and cooperation would be less difficult in the years to come as virtually every country will be affected, making an international strategy inevitable. The sense of crisis was also articulated by the General Secretary in his activities report:

I believe the industry is in crisis in almost every part of the world, probably in *every* part of the world. Of course in the industrialized countries the industries are disappearing, there's hardly a day that passes without there being factories closing. That now has spread to developing countries and all the estimates suggest millions of jobs, not millions of jobs being lost, but millions of jobs being transferred.

The use of China as a pressure to lower workers' demands, and the possible consequences of the MFA phase out surfaced in several of the addresses to the Congress, and the delegates raising the concerns were from countries as diverse as the US and Bangladesh. The threats posed by China and deregulation figured prominently in several of my interviews:

China means a threat, not only for Latin American countries but also for the whole world [...] The unions in core countries are being affected too and the governments of those countries should make sure that the rights of workers are respected worldwide. If they do not do so, we will have instability all around the globe, there is going to be problems, definitely.

Delegate from the Dominican Republic

The delegates from the Dominican Republic, although coming from the continent previously exposed to American trade union imperialism, were very enthusiastic about furthering the cooperation across the North-South divide:

The 'International' should play an active role in bringing the unions from rich countries closer together with those from poor countries. So it could become a global union organization - a real international one.

For the same reason this delegate also pointed out the need to get in touch with Chinese workers and help them organize. The urgent need for global solidarity in the post-MFA textile and garment industries was thus highlighted:

[T]he only way to stop this intolerant, scornful world trade performed by the multinationals that believe they own this world is, I think, a strategic alliance between rich and poor countries. Finally, it is the same struggle that historically the workers have developed. We are lucky we have our 'International'.

“UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL”

If, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the working class is, rather than disappearing, expanding with the rise of global capitalism, and if these objective conditions require a global strategy and increase in workers' solidarity, then what about globalizing their organizations? Can global unions improve the plight of workers at a time when the hegemonic ideology is neoliberalism, and socialism, regarded as the ideology of the working class, is feinted out? Marx (1847) argued for such an upscaling when he wrote of workers that they from the outset constitute a class *in itself* as opposed to capital. It was, however, only when they became united that they were transformed into a class *for itself* issuing class demands. Marx and Engels (1848) envisioned this development of the proletariat as going through successive stages, starting from a position in which the workers are still an incoherent mass broken up by mutual competition. However, they maintained that as industry develops and new machinery equalizes workers' conditions through obliterating most distinctions of work tasks, workers' sense of commonality of interest is awakened. Marx and Engels further held that concurrently, as the crises of capitalism intensify and render workers' lives more precarious, they begin to form trade unions against the bourgeoisie; they unite in order to keep up the rate of their wages through taking them out of competition. However, even though workers could be victorious at the factory level, this would not have long lasting effects due to competition. The overall objective must therefore be not fighting for immediate results at factory level, but an ever expanding union employing the improved means of communication in linking workers in different localities. Marx (1847) thus argued that uniting workers had the dual aim of both stopping the competition among workers and forming a united front in the struggle against capitalists. The two aims are often seen as following each other in succession as workers first combine to maintain or improve the level of wages, but as capitalists unite in order to repress them, the sustenance of the union becomes more important than wages. Hence, Marx and Engels (1848) contended that the class struggle is also a political struggle, and the organization of workers eventually leads to the rise of a political party. Furthermore, it is according to them only when the proletariat makes conscious claims to a place in the political order, that it has become a class *for itself* as opposed to merely a class *in itself*. In other words, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, although it can be argued that Marx and Engels had a relatively optimistic view of the potential of trade unionism, they did not assume a future for the purely *economic* struggle; indeed they probably underestimated the ability of workers to improve their living standards and could not foresee Keynesianism.

In what follows, I will look at these issues raised by Marx and Engels, although having to start at the other end due to the unfolding of events since their time of writing. According to Moody (1997) the organization of production on which most old unions were based have changed irreversibly. The question first dealt with is thus if trade unions are, as has been claimed lately, organizations of the past. It is, however, important to recall what was pointed out in the previous

chapter concerning the unprecedented size of the global proletariat, and that it is still growing. The development of capitalism and the rise of trade unions might be particularly important when it comes to the situation in China. The phase out of the MFA certainly increases the precariousness of textile and garment workers' lives, and the danger of a downward spiral in wages and working conditions is widely recognized among today's trade union leaders in these industries. We can thus arrive at one of the main questions posed in this thesis; will workers be able to expand their union even further in the face of a global 'open market free for all', as the President of the ITGLWF termed it in his address to the Congress. The global level is the highest level at which workers can organize, but also a level at which Marx and Engels' prophecy regarding the rise of a political party becomes difficult to fulfil. According to Arrighi et al. (1989) the political struggle confines the class to the political order it seeks to be a part of. Hence, since the key political entity in modern history has been the state, the primary objective of workers' parties has been obtaining state power. This has meant that even though the movement often had an internationalist rhetoric, the organizations had to be national in structure. I will therefore also have a look at the issue of the politicization of the trade union struggle at the global level for lack of a world parliament or political parties. Since some of the liabilities of global unions are due to inherent properties of trade unionism, I will start by analyzing them before moving on to how they find particular expression at the global level, before turning to mechanisms peculiar to trade union internationalism.

Global Companies – Global Unions?

This heading is derived from an information video issued by the ITGLWF made in order to inform a wide audience of the need for global trade union organization. In the education pack following the video, the geographical spread and the truly international division of labour in the textile and garment industries are recognized as factors requiring concerted global action on part of trade unions (ITGLWF 2002). The juxtaposition between 'unions' and 'global' implies bringing together an old social and a political phenomenon, the trade union, with a new, and in most interpretations an economic, development (Harrod and O'Brien 2002). The emergence of global capitalism and the strong position the transnationals have acquired within it has led to a notion of the objective conditions being ripe for global unions (Olle and Schoeller 1977). This goes together with a realization that trade unions are now globally ubiquitous, although their form varies between national contexts (Harrod and O'Brien 2002). According to Arrighi et al. (1989) the most important question for the labour movement now becomes whether the nation-state will remain the most relevant political entity for seeking power or if it is being hollowed out and is thus losing its potential role as safeguard against deterioration of labour standards. There is also, on the other hand, a recognition of the need to operate at several spatial scales, and the General Secretary of the ITGLWF highlights the need to instigate change at all levels, from the local to the international. The watchword for the future should thus, according to him, be: 'think local, act global – think global, act local' (ITGLWF 2002). However, as the latter also recognize, an international trade union movement is not a newly thought of strategy in the light of the contemporary global capitalism, but has its origins in the 19th century. Harrod and O'Brien (2002) explain the rise of

international trade unions as resulting from three factors; workers employed in 'international' occupations, the emergence of internationally promoted labour issues and the growth of the international socialist movement. They also add, as an immediate cause, the introduction of TNCs, or in the words of one of the officials I interviewed:

I think the international employers are much more global in their operations than they've ever been, much more dominant in the world economy than they've ever been, and that means that trade unions have to build strong and effective international organizations [...] The phase out of the MFA makes that not just desirable, but absolutely essential. Otherwise the industry is just going to completely compete in a race to the bottom without any kind of protection at all.

Moody (1997) maintains that when workers and their trade unions face transnational corporations, whose business decisions are made in a world-wide context, attempting to 'save jobs', either locally or nationally, is a dead end. The General Secretary of the ITGLWF saw the development of Global Unions as a natural transition:

I believe that that's a natural transition in trade unionism. Initially unions would start at the plant level, then you found it began to come sort of city-wide or regional, they then became national, and that was reflecting industrial change. Now I think it's essential that we go global.

These objective conditions for global unions are, however, supplemented by the necessity of a labour response to capital's offensive. Global production chains and centralized corporate control link workers together across the world through common systems of production and common employers. According to Moody (1997) this gives them real leverage over both the production chains and employers if they coordinate their actions. The General Secretary of the ITGLWF takes a defensive stand in this regard, arguing for a strengthening of the trade union movement worldwide lest the bottom is reached through a dismantling of trade unions altogether (ITGLWF 2002). It is maintained that during the last two decades there has been a massive relocation of the industries from the North to the South, and increasingly also a movement within the South to ever cheaper locations. However, it is not just a question of wages, as the absence of trade unions and collective bargaining is also regarded an important locational factor in labour-intensive industries. This latter tendency is seen both in advertisements for a 'union free environment' in Export Processing Zones and the ideological claim in much of the North that trade unions are retarding the competitiveness of national industries. A global strategy might therefore be important in taking not only wages but also union organization out of competition. Both Moody (1997) and Wahl (2004) further highlight the deterioration of welfare and working conditions, the brutalization of work, the exposure to market competition and the reduction of workers' influence over their working day and the work process common to workers North and South in the 'lean world'.

Relics of a bygone era?

As already mentioned, a question commonly posed in academic circles is whether the time of both the working class and its organizations, the most important of which are trade unions, has come to an end. The justifications given for these claims range from those taking the move beyond class,

and hence the inappropriateness of trade unions, as their point of departure to those regarding trade unions as too bureaucratic and toothless for the challenges facing working people.

According to Müller-Jentsch (ref. Hyman 1992) unions faced three crises during the 1980s, one of interest aggregation, one of employee loyalty and one of representativeness. In addition you have what Hyman (1992) terms organizational sclerosis, or the argument recognized by Touraine (1986:157) that “movements such as unionism have a life history: infancy, youth, maturity, old age, and death”. Hyman’s (1992) argument resembles Wahl’s (2004), as he claims that trade unions have become fossilized into institutional arrangements and routines resistant to adaptation. This, however, is highly Westerncentric, as trade unions in several peripheral countries are rather new organizations not having any historically inherited positions. One of the officials I interviewed maintained that this made it all the more important not to initiate programs creating them in a Western image, as their opportunity to start with clean sheets was regarded as an advantage. He even maintained that Western unions had something to learn from their comrades in the South:

Unions often in the South are more effective, I would say, than they are in the North, very often. It’s not always the case. But certainly I can point to a number of cases where that is true – where unions in the North are weak, where unions in the South are strong.

The General Secretary also pointed out during his activities report to the Congress the need to avoid using the trade union structures of the North as blueprints, especially in ‘development projects’ aimed at building unionism in the South:

Sometimes there is an argument on the part of donor organizations, they think that because they come from the rich North they know everything, they can direct union organizations in other parts of the world of what they should do and how they should do it. You know, I’m bringing the Irish to solve the problems of Honduras or solve the problems of Vietnam or whatever.

It goes without saying that some of the educational projects conducted in the peripheral countries still bear resemblance to trade union imperialism. Even without calling it imperialism, however, the delegate from Sri Lanka regarded these projects as retarding the development of effective unions in the South:

I’m completely different on education. I’ll start with the leaders here in Europe. They’re ignorant! They have a certain basic know-how, but they have no grasp of the very global system and society in which they live. They’re not conscious of their own psychology. They are products of the system [...] My union is still a relatively strong union and it was built without any workers’ education. We educated ourselves and we educated our people.

His argument is hence that trade unions as such still have much unfinished business and thereby a *raison d’être*, but that the road taken by them in the Western world is both a product of particular historical and geographical contexts and a dead-end. In order to avoid a turkey teaching sparrows to fly, he was strongly opposed to educational programs, and maintained that trade unions would proliferate in the wake of proletarianization. This was also his solution to the question of what to

do with China in the wake of the MFA phase out; in time workers in China will by themselves go about unionizing.

Interest disaggregation

Apart from the consciousness of trade union leaders, and returning to Hyman (1992), the current crises of trade unionism can also be attributed to changes at the grassroots level. With his focus on interest disaggregation within the working class, he identifies the processes of a shift from collectivism towards individualism, a polarization within the working class, a growing particularism of collective identities and a fragmentation within the 'organized working class'. The latter argument is related to the notion of a new individualism, that is, workers defining their interests individually or in terms of particularistic identities leading to an erosion of their mutual solidarity. However, Hyman acknowledges that the diagnosis of disaggregative tendencies is usually given after the symptoms have manifested themselves. One of these symptoms, and one which is often employed in substantiating the declining relevance of trade unions, is the drop in union membership. Hyman (1992) identifies three categories of disaggregation arguments. The *first* is that economic stagnation might fuel intra-class division and disunity due to unemployment and ensuing competition for jobs, but also because recessions have uneven impact where the beneficiaries often do not care for the losers through advancing social policies. In choosing the textile and garment industries at the brink of deregulation, this was a central focus in the interviews I conducted, functioning as a litmus test on workers' solidarity. *Another* important challenge for trade unions is the disbanding of large factories in favour of smaller, and more dispersed workplaces, coupled with the increase of part-time and temporal jobs, or in one word; flexibilization. It might, however, be argued that these trends increase the significance of trade unions as it is easier for employers to resort to the strategy of 'divide and rule' when the opportunity of workers to engage in daily exchange of opinions is severely circumscribed. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, and regarding trade unionization in developed countries, the occupational shift away from industry to services has deprived the labour movement of its traditional blue-collar backbone. However, taking the international level into consideration, these jobs are not lost, but only being transferred to more peripheral countries in what has been termed a new international division of labour. In other words, the case becomes not to abandon trade unions, but to start the process of organizing anew, breaking new frontiers thus opening up possibilities of organizational innovations. The case of the Self-Employed Women's Association of India (SEWA), which is affiliated to the ITGLWF, was held out in several of my interviews as an inspiring beacon for trade unions to follow in response to the recent day informalization and flexibilization of employment:

[T]raditional unions in India are very good at organizing workers in the huge textile mills [...] *But*, the problem is [...] when it came to informal workers then they really didn't think they had a role in the union. They didn't even think of them as workers, I mean. [SEWA] has had huge success [...] and now, not only is SEWA bigger than all the other unions in our sector put together, they're also the fastest growing trade union organization in our sector around the world. And this is, I think, a very good example of how unions in the South can teach us in

the North, and colleagues in the South, how to organize effectively. We've never in this country [the UK], for example, succeeded, or not anywhere else in Europe, succeeded in organizing informal workers into trade unions.

ITGLWF Official

What nonetheless remains a challenge to trade unions is organizing workers in the weakest positions in the labour market as they might lack both the resources and the cohesion for collective organization (Hyman 1992). Additionally, these workers are often in an economically vulnerable position and asymmetric employment relations, and hence quite submissive due to the fear of unemployment. The vulnerability of textile and garment workers was widely recognized, in the words of one of the officials I interviewed:

[I]t is a poorly organized sector, but it's also a sector where employer militancy is quite severe. And workers genuinely are intimidated, and these people are on like poverty wages to start with so the propensity to keep the head down is quite high, you know.

The role of employers in 'busting' unions should hence not be downplayed either, whether this occurs through actions or ideological hegemony. As industry is shifted to areas lacking a trade union tradition, employers often display strong resistance to organizing efforts (Hyman 1992). As seen in the above quote, employers in the textile and garment industries usually do not welcome trade unions on board, but rather intimidate or fire workers trying to organize. The third category of disaggregation is hence changes in the broader political and ideological influences on trade unionism. The immediate post-WWII period saw, in the developed countries, a political climate favourable to a massive presence of trade unions as they were given a publicly confirmed status in participating in decision-making. The onset of neoliberalism worldwide has led to a reduction in trade union influence, and, as Hyman (1992) argues, unions were often expected to perform a restraining and disciplining role in an effort to enhance national competitiveness. The changed political climate with the rise to power of conservative regimes has also reduced the recognition of unions as important players, instead casting them as scapegoats for economic decline and backwardness. Attempting to attract inward investment, local economies tend to compete in terms of labour market deregulation, sacrificing workers' rights in return for reductions in the growth rate of unemployment, and some of them even advertise a cheap labour force and weakness of local trade unions (Jessop 1998). On the ideological terrain, employers have been pushing for deregulation in employment legislation and decentralization of bargaining, often being in the forefront of claiming that trade unions are superfluous or even retarding national competitiveness (Hyman 1992). There has of late been a growing significance of plant level bargaining at the expense of the old multi-employer, industry-wide wage rates. In addition, these company-level negotiations often do not involve trade unions, but rather consultative committees or quality circles often set up and controlled by the employer. The existence of such bodies of 'employee participation' is challenging the unions' role as the representatives of workers. A consequence of the decentralization of collective bargaining is that the basis of national union authority is undermined, and the long-term future of union *movements*, as opposed to isolated unions, is being questioned due to organizational differentiation. However, if the local affiliates retain their

recognition and strength, the case for building international networks within companies might be stronger than with powerful national centres. On the other hand, the advent of lean production has often posed a serious challenge to local unions as well through for instance work reorganization (Moody 1997).

Critics of the disaggregation thesis maintain that it is oversimplified, overgeneralized and that it hinges on a mythologized vision of the past as a golden age when workers were spontaneously collectivist and united (Hyman 1992). Moody (1997) argues that it is important to sort out what constitutes fragmentation and what represents a new way in which workers are pushed together, and hence a way forward. In addition, he claims that recomposition of the working class by industries, occupations, ethnicity and so on is and has always been an inherent feature of capitalism. The working class has never been free from internal conflict and contradictions, as was recognized already by Marx and Engels (1848:230): “This organization of proletarians into a class [...] is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves”. On this basis, instead of reaching the conclusion that trade unions are out of date, Moody (1997:145) argues that the competition and contradictions within the working class were the reason for establishing unions in the first place: “[I]t is and always was organization that is the answer to this problem”. Unions have hence always been rooted in a myriad of immediate, localized experiences and aspirations, and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, broader solidarities and organization require deliberate effort (Hyman 1992). To the extent that trade unionism has traditionally been involved in the mobilization of particularistic interests, such as those of white male workers, Hyman argues that the radicalism following the late 1960s has increased the efforts to reorientate trade union policy in a direction more in line with the broader spectrum of interests. This will be especially important in industries like textiles and garment, since the proportion of women and foreign workers in the workforce is high. More generally, the disbanding of the mass factories might be viewed as a fundamental threat to trade union politics based on the traditional skilled, manual, white male constituency. For those who regard this kind of unionism as the authentic form, it might seem as if trade unions are a relic of the past. However, as pointed out introductorily, the notion of a proletariat or working class is an abstraction of a social relation and not a description or generalization of a social group, and hence there is no claim to uniformity and conformity. On the other hand Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that as the old social institutions are in crisis, and production is shifted from the factory level to the individual, then resistance is also downscaled. Trade unions and collective bargaining, institutions in their own right, are losing their effectiveness and their role as vanguard. The heading of this chapter is thus substituted for ‘individually we stand, and in parallel we fight’. Contrary to Hardt and Negri’s contention, Callinicos (1995) maintain that workers have only one strength, which is their collective ability to bring the capitalist system to a halt through strike action. Hyman (1992) also qualifies the notion of organizational fragmentation, as this is only one side of the story, the other being one of inter-union cooperation and in some cases even amalgamation.

Workers fleeing unions?

The parole of the 9th ITGLWF Congress being 'Educate, Agitate, Organize!' the issue of declining membership rates figured high on the agenda. In his activities report to the Congress the General Secretary expressed some dissatisfaction with the affiliates' efforts at organizing, but he nevertheless pointed out the necessity of not being too critical due to the circumstances in which they try to set up trade unions:

Hostile employers, I would say hostile and *aggressive* employers, hostile governments - take for example the Dominican Republic. Unions there attempting to organize are met with harassment, intimidation, their leaders beaten up by thugs and when they try to defend themselves; thrown in prison [...] I think anyone in those circumstances, any of the workers in those factories, must seriously hesitate before they see themselves subjected to that sort of intimidation. Some of the young women organizing in Guatemala didn't just have death threats against themselves, but they were asked: 'are you sure your children would be safe?'

When it comes to the subjective consciousness and the assertion of a new individualism, it is important to recall the discussion on the concept of solidarity. While trade union activists and ideologues often look upon collectivism as a moral value in its own right, most workers join unions for instrumental reasons, that is, it is regarded the most effective means of realizing individual needs and aspirations. This corresponds to Stirling's view of solidarity as not contrary to pragmatic self-interest, but rather built out of it. However, there is a danger here in making unions too instrumentally attractive. Hyman (1992) argues that unions representing merely mechanical and not organic solidarity often have passive members relating only to the trade unions as one among many other bureaucratic institutions regulating the employment relation. He goes on to contend that if it this mode of collectivism that is being undermined, then it is not necessarily regrettable, but rather an opportunity. During a discussion of the declining membership rates in the activities report, the General Secretary did not deplore the loss accounted for by the withdrawal from a unionism based on extensive range of insurance benefits:

[M]any of our unions were little more than insurance companies, where members paid subscription and had no or little other contact with the union until there was a problem. We continually tried to invest upon our affiliates that this is not the way that trade unionism was built, it was about members working with the union, fighting with the union, struggling with the union, winning with the union and sometimes, of course, losing with the union.

The decline in membership of communist-oriented confederations has led some observers to talk of a depoliticization of the trade union movement. However, Hyman (1992) argues that a beneficial side effect of this is that an erosion of previously persistent ideological divisions may create new ground for increasing inter-confederal cooperation. The dogmatism of leftists often divided them among themselves leading to what Freud termed narcissism of small differences, by which he meant that intolerance is exhibited more strongly against small differences than against fundamental ones. The factionalism among movements resisting the Roman Empire in Monty Python's *Life of Brian* is a humorous illustration of this, where the members of the People's Front of Judea express: "The only people we hate more than the Romans are the fucking Judean

People's Front". A real life example is the outright incompatibility of Stalinists and Maoists on the one hand and Trotskyists on the other. With fewer dogmas, there might also be fewer hobbyhorses to ride. Whether this amounts to a depoliticization is open to question, as it might also involve concretization. I will return to politicization and concretization in the next chapter.

Callinicos (1995), in posing the question as to whether the trade unions are an anachronism, argues that the basic idea of trade unionism – united we stand, divided we fall – is as true today as it was on the day this phrase was coined. His argument is, like that of the Sri Lankan delegate, that wherever capitalism exists workers will and ought to join unions in order to better their conditions. Furthermore he states that although it is not possible to wish away the defeats suffered in the 1970s and 1980s, they should not be overstated either as the 1990s saw a movement in the direction of a revival in confidence and organization. Regarding the decline in membership rates, Callinicos points to several cases of abuse of statistics where the impression is given that workers are abandoning the trade unions due to excessive militancy, while the decline is in large part due to increasing unemployment as seen in figures of union density. To the extent that there has been a decline in membership, contrary to the assertion of excessive militancy, Callinicos holds the trade union leadership responsible for it, because of their 'new realism' and recruitment policies. According to him, union leaders turned their backs on the traditional methods of organization and accepted the stringent limitations on trade unions imposed by neoliberal regimes. Additionally, and in accordance with what the General Secretary is quoted as saying above, Callinicos regrets the strategy of attracting new members by providing services such as credit cards and cheap insurance, thus abandoning active recruitment and industrial actions demonstrating the effectiveness of trade unionism. Referring to surveys, he also argues that this kind of 'insurance unionism' was not what most union members wanted. The resurgence of worker militancy in the 1990s is recognized by both Callinicos (1995) and Moody (1997), but they also point to the need for a new trade union strategy when it comes to dealing with employers, governments and political parties.

Asking the devil not to be such a bad boy?

According to Callinicos (1995) there are two fundamental limitations inherent in trade unionism. First of all, trade unions do not usually encompass the whole class, but divides it according to industries or trades, a matter I will return to later. Secondly, they devote themselves mainly to improving workers' conditions *within* capitalism without seeking to transcend it. In turn, these two limitations add up to a third; an acceptance on part of both leaders and members of a sharp division between economics and politics. Gramsci (ref. Sassoon 1987) maintained that while trade unions still served the important task of protecting labour as a commodity within a competitive framework, their form and nature were determined by, and thus limited to, the capitalist system in which they developed. Moreover, even if they won on certain claims, these were absorbed by the system as trade unions never attacked the principle of private property since they were unable to challenge bourgeois legality. For instance, in the struggle for higher wages, the trade unions dealt with the capitalists in circumstances and concerning terms defined by capitalism. Furthermore, in

order to be regarded as acceptable representatives and negotiating partners, and thus successful in signing and maintaining contracts, the unions not only had to remain within the established legality, but also prevent workers from moving beyond it. This is not solely a question of reformism, as Gramsci is also criticizing the trade unions' definition of the worker as a provider of labour power to be bought in the labour market as a commodity in competition with other workers. He thus contends that the trade union has a competitive, and not a communist character (Sassoon 1987). Due to their roots in the capitalist system, the trade unions have a temporary nature, as they would only retain their role as long as society is based on the existence of private property and wage-labour. He even likens trade unions to firms (Gramsci 1919-20:11): "[W]hen individuals are only valued as owners of commodities, which they trade as property, the workers too are forced to obey the iron laws of general necessity; they become traders in their sole property – their labour power [...] More exposed to the risks of competition, the workers have accumulated their property in ever broader and more comprehensive 'firms' [...] They have hired from outside or produced from inside a trusted administrative staff expert in this kind of speculation". In what follows I will deal with these issues, albeit not necessarily in this order of appearance.

The separation of economics and politics

Gramsci (ref. Sassoon 1987) maintained that due to the fact that the labour movement is a response to the bourgeois society, it also duplicates its outlook and thereby the separation between economics and politics. This separation leads to an attitude which gives trade unions the responsibility of the economic struggle of workers, while the Labour Party devotes its attention to defending the political interests of workers in the parliament (Callinicos 1995). And, according to Eder (2002), this very separation and confinement of the economic trade union struggle to the market relation and the political class struggle to parliamentarism is, from the viewpoint of capital, ideal. The drawback of this separation, Callinicos (1995) argues, is that it encourages the belief that the class struggle is a non-political, economic and social issue, and that workers' interests are best catered for through negotiations and reforms. In other words, it puts brakes on any movement from demanding better returns towards challenging the existence of capitalism. Callinicos further maintains that nowhere does the separation of economics from politics find a clearer expression than in the liberal democracies, where democracy extends to electing a government but not to participating in the decision-making of companies.

Lenin (1902) argued that workers can only attain political class consciousness from without the economic struggle. The form taken by the trade union struggle reflects the fact that their operations are confined to the capitalist wages system, and even when trade unions enter the politics, such as in the struggle for a shorter working day, Lenin argued that they were only engaging in capitalist politics. Lenin (ref. Harding 1996) gave a great role to the party, but separated it from the class. This is because the party was charged with the responsibility of articulating the general and long-term interests of wage workers, and thus had to elevate itself above the consciousness already achieved among the working class. Trade unions, on the other hand, would be the right vehicles in the battle for minor economic improvements, that is,

concentrating on bread-and-butter issues. The economism of trade unions makes the party necessary, because a narrow focus on economic issues opens the possibility of the bourgeoisie portraying themselves as friends of labour, and the working class is fated to be led by opportunists. In his writings on imperialism, Lenin (ref. Brewer 1990) even uses the word bribery. Even though Trotsky places considerable weight on trade unions in the transitional epoch, he opposes syndicalists and agrees with Lenin that trade unions do not offer any finished revolutionary program, and that they therefore cannot replace the party. However, especially before the February Revolution, Trotsky, together with Luxemburg, opposed Lenin's efforts to build a centralized revolutionary party, as he believed that the development of mass workers' organizations would generate the needed transformations in consciousness for the proletariat to play an independent political role (Callinicos 1990). The delegate from Sri Lanka, being the General Secretary of a general union, also stressed the importance of independence when it comes to retaining trade union rights:

When our union decides on a general strike in protest of some political issue, the companies say: 'Why do you go on a strike on a matter that doesn't affect us?' I say: 'Because we have got other interests than your company!' [...] That is genuine independence.

Stalin (1921) makes an effort to grasp the mobilization of the masses, and argues that the danger of an economic crisis does not spur the masses to the same extent as a war danger. He thus claims that in order to rouse the masses for a struggle against capitalism it is necessary to convince them by concrete facts that economic ruin is a real and mortal danger. To do this, workers must be drawn into democratic trade unions, as this is the only way to make the entire working class interested in this struggle against economic ruin.

According to Gramsci (ref. Sassoon 1987) trade unions were neither revolutionary nor counter-revolutionary thus rendering them a crucial area for political initiative. He further maintained that whether a particular activity is economistic or not depends on its role in the complex reality and its potential for changing the balance of forces. Writing on political economy, Gramsci also pointed out the possibility of challenging the political dominance of the bourgeoisie in the terrain of production through conducting a political struggle utilising the organizations based in production. Gramsci's views develop over time, he later put more faith in the party, but he maintained that the struggle of the proletariat was fought on three fronts; the economic, the political and the ideological. The trade union struggle was placed at the economic front, and due to it being spontaneous it was not in itself revolutionary. Hence, it had to be accompanied by a political struggle on part of the party, a crucial element of which was ideology. In other words, repeating some of his earlier points, the trade unions would never lead the proletariat beyond capitalism, for this the element of consciousness, that is, ideology, was needed. The members of the party should therefore be intellectuals, and the party should itself have a vanguard nature. While workers entered trade unions as workers, and remained identified as such, in the party they became political men and theoreticians of socialism. The party thus allows them to move beyond economic corporativism, and become builders of a new order instead of rebelling the existing one.

Although Gramsci does not use the words, it is quite clear that he sees the party as the proactive body, while the trade unions never can be anything other than reactive (Sassoon 1987). However, several of my informants raised the issue of moving beyond reactive economism:

I think, what I understand as traditional trade unionism is, if you like, unions representing workers on immediate economic issues in the workplace, what we call bread-and-butter issues, in particular concerned about negotiating the best possible collective bargaining agreements every year or every two years, whatever. There have been negotiations about wages and other conditions. And then anything else would be regarded as clearly not essentially important to the trade union role. Yeah, I think that certainly is an old-fashioned approach and one that we would want to consign to the dustbin, really. We say organizing has to begin at home, but we've got to look at it in a wider context and especially with globalization - you can't avoid even international issues. You need to understand what's happening in the world in order to represent workers at home effectively.

ITGLWF Official

Regarding the limitations pertaining to operating within capitalism, Hyman (1992) argues that trade unionism has always displayed a tension between revolutionary ambition and the more routine defence of workers' immediate interests. Furthermore, he recognizes three elements of this tension; the pressure to subordinate the long-term goal of socialist transformation to short-term tactical imperatives of operating within capitalism; the pressure to shape an agenda fit to what can realistically be demanded in collective bargaining; and the domination in policy formation by segments of the working class having particular skills giving them a relative advantage.

The orientation of the masses is, according to Trotsky (1938), determined by two factors; firstly by the objective conditions of capitalism, which for him meant imperialism, and, secondly, by the treacherous politics of the old workers' organizations. This treachery consists of trade unions drawing close to and growing together with state power seeking its cooperation, consequently partaking in the imperialist project (Trotsky 1940). The aspiration for state cooperation is held to be a result of the objective conditions of monopoly capitalism based as it is not upon free competition and private initiative, but centralized command. Trade unions find themselves deprived of the possibility of benefiting from the competition among different enterprises, and have to confront a centralized capitalist enemy intimately bound up with state power. Brewer (1990) argues that due to the power held by large corporations with huge financial resources they might be in a strong position to resist wage claims and to suppress trade unions, especially if they, as also Trotsky recognized, call on state support. Where smaller firms compete with each other no single firm is in a position to set standards deviating from the average. As a result, workers can gain a general wage increase throughout the industry through forces operating at this level; either a general shortage of labour in the industry, a strong trade union organization or state intervention. Brewer also argues that while it is possible for a monopoly, due to its profits and protected position, to pay higher wages, there is nothing compelling it to do so either. Alternatively, the firm might decide to pay higher wages to a privileged few in order to forestall trade unionism or to gain the support and loyalty of its workers. This is what led to an emergent labour aristocracy and trade union bureaucracy fighting for its share of the superprofits derived

from imperialism (Trotsky 1940). Hence, Trotsky argued that trade unions could either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism or as instruments for an anti-systemic movement of workers. He even argued that the bourgeoisie is consciously co-opting trade unions and hence liquidating them as agents of class struggle and turning them into bureaucratic transmission belts of state power. Although it might be maintained that the balance of forces today has shifted in favour of companies, and that the state to a greater extent is at the mercy of foreign capital with whom its allegiance is placed is seldom in doubt. Hence, Wahl (2004) argues that any trade union strategy based on seeking partnerships with governments and employers in order to raise the competitiveness of national industry is futile, or possibly even counterproductive to improving the plight of workers. The delegate from Sri Lanka was even critical to be involved in tripartite negotiations:

All these illusions, and I'm really critical about this, here we are producing these strategy documents; all this work should be done: pressurize your government, call upon transnationals - it's like asking the leopard to change his spots, or for the devil to be an angel or not to be such a bad boy.

However, Trotsky does not draw the conclusion that trade unions cease to be trade unions in the imperialist epoch. Rather, he seeks to overcome the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions under imperialism, and the immaturity of the proletariat by setting up a transitional program (Trotsky 1938). Due to the objective conditions, that is imperialism, Trotsky (1940) holds that trade unions can no longer be reformist, mainly because there is no longer room for any serious or lasting reforms. Hence, due to the temporary nature of reforms, the trade unions can no longer consider themselves politically neutral or limit themselves to cater only for the daily and economic needs of the working class (Trotsky 1940). Trotsky thereby pointed out the necessity of a politicization of the trade unions, and he maintains that the work within them instead of losing its importance becomes even more important. In proposing a transitional program Trotsky (1938) attempted to bridge the present demands of workers with the socialist program of the proletarian revolution, and he insists that it is a program for the activity of trade unions (Trotsky 1940). The program thus contains demands regarding wages, working hours, employment for all and decent living conditions, and they are made revolutionary through their clashing with the tendencies of capitalism, consequently being directed against the very bases of the bourgeois regime. Because the competition between workers is essential to the system of wage labour, trade unionism might pose a deadly threat to it. Trotsky (1938:unnumbered) assumes that property owners' reply will be to point to the unrealizability of the demands, but he comes up with an answer: "[i]f capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish". It is in waging the transitional demands trade unions have an important role to play, both in signing collective agreements and building solidarity among the dispossessed (including the unemployed). This dovetails with the discussion in the previous chapter on the consciousness of workers, where both Bakunin (year unknown) and Trotsky (1938) are cited regarding the need to approach workers with tangible facts and a

consideration for their daily strivings. But again, we are warned against any attempts to subordinate the trade unions to the state and the binding of the proletariat to compulsory arbitration. Against those opposed to struggle for the partial and transitional demands of workers, thus turning their backs on trade unions, Trotsky asks if the masses can live outside the conditions of the actual class struggle, and if it is possible to win the masses without caring for their daily strife. He criticizes them for having great pretensions without any chance for success, as they are dawdling in one place repeating the same abstractions, and viewing political events as occasions for comment and not action. Another problem with trade unions that Trotsky identifies, in accordance with Lenin, is the inclination for them to embrace only the top layers of the proletariat, and hence have powerful tendencies toward compromises with the bourgeois regime. In conclusion Trotsky maintains that trade unions are not ends in themselves, but important means in the fight for a proletarian revolution. In the light of this, he argues that unless trade unions assume a central role in the revolutionary movement, they will end up serving imperialist capitalism by subordinating and disciplining workers (Trotsky 1940). As reality is often not either/or it is possible to find traces of both of these directions. Trade unions have on the one hand engaged in imperialist actions in foreign lands as well as embarking upon a disciplining of workers in the contemporary accumulation by dispossession (Moody 1997). Although instances of trade union imperialism were admitted by one of the officials I interviewed, especially in the past and not through the ITGLWF. Most of the times, this involved affiliates giving money to other affiliates to do certain jobs for them, or, as often the case in Latin America, US unions supporting campaigns aiming at the overthrow of governments. However, the matter was too delicate for him to expand upon. On the other hand, it is also possible to discern the opposite direction depicted by Trotsky as in this quote from the ITGLWF's constitution:

To co-operate in the establishment of a world order based on the association of all peoples in freedom and equality for the protection of their common welfare by the joint use of the world's resources.

(ITGLWF 2004b:7, Rule 3.6)

Proceedings from the 8th World Congress of the ITGLWF held in 2000 also show that this rule is not some long-forgotten statement of the radical labour movement of 19th Century, as it was debated due to a proposal to delete it and substitute it for a clause on the elimination of child labour. The same delegate from Sri Lanka as I interviewed was not merciful in his address to the Congress:

I ask, by what possible stretch of imagination the elimination of child labour can be a substitute for the existing world social order and its replacement by a just and equitable social order in the interest of the peoples in all countries [...] And I just cannot understand why at this stage in this very indirect way, we remove as an object of the ITGLWF [...] an aim which seeks to change this existing ruinous world order which produces among other things gross poverty, child labour and all the rest of it. I just cannot go along with that!

(ITGLWF 2000:107)

The amendment was voted upon and fell with such a majority that the President did not need tellers to judge the outcome. In addition, one of the officials I interviewed regretted the lack of an explicitly anti-systemic agenda:

We don't state anywhere explicitly that we're seeking the overthrow of capitalism. I don't know *why* we don't say that anywhere, but that's my own personal belief.

In dealing with flexible accumulation, Moody (1997) identifies both of the responses depicted by Trotsky in the contemporary trade union movement; while the leaders of unions in the Western world have chosen to accept concessions and are pressing for the implementation of lean production, much of the rank and file, especially in the South, have opted for a more militant approach. However, the North-South dichotomy seems to be too simple as there are other mechanisms involved, and I found diverse points of view regarding the role and capacities of trade unions within the category we call 'South'. While the delegates from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to some extent envisioned a role for trade unions in instigating change, the delegates from India were more focussed on the need to organize the unorganized and bread-and-butter issues:

If we try to agitate and we try to oppose the phase out of the MFA, I don't think we will be able to change it, the process. What is within our limitations, what is within our capacity is to educate our people and say how they have to accept this challenge and what they have to do. So that is the thing that we are doing now [...] We try to get good salaries, not good salaries, but minimum wages that has been decided by our government. [...] We also want protection. Our industry is also in need of protection. But since we have signed WTO, and WTO it's not going to withdraw it, so what can we do? We have to face the challenge. We cannot change that rule - it's not in the capacity of the trade unions, because our capacity or strength is not that strong.

Even when it came to the more traditional role of trade unions in negotiating and implementing framework agreements, the Indians doubted the capacity of their trade unions:

Certainly it is a good document. The only thing is that it has to be respected at all levels. And at all levels we don't have manpower to supervise it. Monitoring - [...] trade unions don't have that much capacity, or enough manpower to supervise it.

Commenting on the same issue, the delegate from Sri Lanka regretted not so much the work involved in monitoring the compliance with the agreements as much as them not being anti-systemic:

[T]hese guidelines for transnationals accept the transnationals. [And] they really are mostly cosmetic. But some are not even prepared for that, even on paper, they don't want even recognize trade unions internationally – why should they? And the trade unions are becoming marginalized.

However, the delegates from India, knowing that I had interviewed the delegate from Sri Lanka, pointed out that although they have their differences, attributing much of it to generational shifts, they do not totally disagree:

[W]hat [the delegate from Sri Lanka] is saying concerns the ideologies here [...], and he is a devoted trade union leader, sacrificed his life. So he must have seen the golden days and how trade unions were working⁶. And now he must have seen a lot of changes in trade unions. He's from the old generation, and sticking to the old ideologies [...] But we don't have any differences [...] You know, sometimes we also agree with what he says, because sometimes there is something in the old generation. But what we are saying is that we cannot change the world, it is not within our capabilities, so we ought to keep ourselves along with that.

The relation between bureaucracy and rank and file

The discrepancy between unions in the North and unions in the South have already been touched upon, but in global trade unionism this also to some extent map onto the question of bureaucracy and rank and file. This is because the leadership of unions from the developed countries often exerts strong influence on the policy of global unions both through the fact that the financial contributions of their unions are many times greater than those of unions from underdeveloped countries, but also through custom, that is, they are older organizations thereby also having a more consolidated bureaucracy. In addition the officials of Global Union Federations are almost without exception from developed countries. According to Luxemburg (1906) and Callinicos (1995) the trade union bureaucracy is a social layer of full time officials having a material interest in limiting the class struggle to the fight for reforms within capitalism, and their mindset is, as also recognized by the delegate from Sri Lanka, shaped by their relations to capitalist society and the bourgeoisie with whom they associate. Their social position leads to a certain politics, and a search for “a ‘new trade-union theory’, that is, a theory which would open an illimitable vista of economic progress to the trade-union struggle within the capitalist system” (Luxemburg 1906:unnumbered, ch. 8). It is in other words the bureaucracy which is held responsible for the policy of class collaboration discussed above. The formation of this layer of labour bureaucrats is in addition, according to Callinicos, inherent in the nature of trade unionism, leaving not even militant trade unionism immune to the tendency. This leads us back to the observation made by Marx in 1865, that the trade union struggle is concerned with improving workers’ plight through making exploitation more bearable and not through abandoning it. An attempt to confine the class struggle within capitalism in turn presumes that the interests of workers and capitalists can be reconciled. (Callinicos 1995). Once the institutions of interest reconciliation are entrenched, the need arises for someone to negotiate the compromises between capital and labour encouraging a division of labour between the rank and file and its trade union representatives. The latter’s time is increasingly spent on bargaining, leading to the consolidation of full-time workers in the union thus isolating them from the workers they represent. They are removed from the discipline of the shop floor, and the immediate conflicts arising there, to an office. In addition, their constant dealing with employers leads them to look upon negotiation, compromise and reconciliation as the *raison d’être* of trade unions, while struggles more and more appear as inconveniences and disruptions of the bargaining process threatening the financial funds of the union. The officials are hence reluctant to wield the weapons of economic class struggle for the fear of upsetting their

⁶ The delegate about whom they are talking had over 50 years of experience in the trade union movement.

relations with the employers and endangering the stability of the trade unions. Callinicos even claims that the efficient running of the organization becomes an end in itself, jeopardizing even the active fight for improving workers' conditions. This is in accordance with what Luxemburg (1906:unnumbered, ch. 8) observed in Germany at the time of the introduction of union bureaucracy: "the overvaluation of the organization, which from being a means has gradually changed into an end in itself, a precious thing, to which the interests of the struggles should be subordinated". The very successes of the German trade unions were therefore held as the roots of their non-spontaneity. Since the struggles workers wage, including on merely bread-and-butter issues, may threaten the system's stability, union leaders intervene time and again to prevent these struggles from getting out of control, often ending them on terms falling short of the workers' initial demands (Callinicos 1995). Although Callinicos maintains that the fundamental division within the trade union movement is the conflict between bureaucracy and the rank and file, he acknowledges that leftists would dispute this claim, arguing that the main division is ideological. Admitting that there are deep political divisions among trade union leaders, he does, however, contend that the real question is not the existence of this division but whether it is more important than the interests binding all union officials together as a distinct social layer. To this question he gives the answer that what divides the left and right wing officials is less than what unites them. However, there is a real danger in being too categorical on this issue, as the official from Sri Lanka, both a General Secretary of his union and a Trotskyist, could in no respect be regarded as a reformist. And while Callinicos (1995:22) argues that in addition to elevating the maintenance of the union machine to a goal in itself, the trade union leadership is also influenced by "a sense of collective responsibility which makes them reluctant to rock the boat". Again, the delegate from Sri Lanka deviates as he claimed that he had no vision on part of his union, it was a means to an end, and when the end was accomplished the union should be relinquished. Callinicos (1995), on the other hand, concludes that the rank and file, instead of relying on some trade union leader at the top, should look to themselves and the solidarity they are able to build. The bureaucrats, moreover, are afraid of losing their privileges vis-à-vis the rank and file, and their fear of the mass struggle is greater than their dislike of the state. At decisive moments the trade union leadership has in other words a propensity to side with the state. However, Callinicos does not reach the conclusion that trade unions should be disbanded. They are after all the mass defence organizations of the working class, and socialists should be actively involved in them, although adopting a careful approach and reminding the workers of the importance of not relying too strongly on the full-time officials. In other words, official action should not be regarded contrary to what activists are pressing for, but rather as an additional authority when wielded with precaution. This is in accordance with Gramsci's (1920) view of the appropriate relationship between factory councils and trade unions. He agreed that the development of the latter entailed a concentration and generalization of power and discipline bringing about a strong central office. However, this is not viewed solely in negative terms, as Gramsci recognizes the merits of a removal from the fickle spontaneity and naïve ambitions of the masses. The union acquires an ability to negotiate agreements and take on responsibilities, thus obliging the employers to

acknowledge a certain industrial legality in their dealings with workers. Gramsci moreover regards this legality as a great victory for the working class, although he emphasizes the importance of not resting on the laurels as it does not amount to an ultimate or definitive victory. The industrial legality is, according to Gramsci, no more than a compromise, and hence not permanent, although it must be made and supported until the balance of forces has shifted in favour of the working class. Lately this balance has shifted in the opposite direction, and Wahl (2004) argues that the compromise has broken down, a matter I will return to below. What is important to Gramsci (1920) is for the trade union officials to wield the weapon of industrial legality in an appropriate fashion, that is, considering it as a necessary though not permanently necessary compromise. The trade union will hence be a revolutionary organization if it deploys its means in tipping the balance of forces in favour of the working class while raising the consciousness of workers. In order to forestall the abovementioned overvaluation of the organization, Gramsci further proposes a strategic relationship between the trade unions and lower level organizations such as factory councils. As the former by virtue of its bureaucratic form tends to put on hold or prevent outright class conflict, the latter is more spontaneously radical. The relation should hence ensure that the trade unions prevent the capricious impulse of the rank and file from resulting in set-backs or defeats on part of the working class.

Another consequence of trade union bureaucracy recognized by Callinicos (1995) is the creation of a social base for reformist political parties. Historically, there has even been formal, institutional links between the two. Wills (1998), however, argues that this is beginning to change as the ruling powers of the developed nations no longer need the alliance with national working classes in the fight against communism. Lately there has also been a break-up as several of the national centres in Europe, such as the TUC in the UK, the DGB in Germany and local offices of LO Norway, which previously had close ties to their respective Labour Parties are either breaking away or criticizing the parties openly⁷. The increased dissonance in the relationship between political parties and trade unions does not, however, pertain solely to the developed countries with both Lier (2005) and one of the ITGLWF officials I interviewed pointing to the tension in South Africa:

[T]he old-fashioned trade unions, or the founder trade unions in the traditional sectors, have a particular relationship with the social democratic parties. In fact, in Britain it was the trade unions that founded the Labour Party [...] There's a philosophical question, I think, whether trade unions ought to be completely independent of political parties. We found it in South Africa, because COSATU and the ANC have a special relationship, and now we find that the government in South Africa is doing things like privatization of certain industries and so on which is contrary to the policy of the trade union movement. And, certainly we would say, contrary to the interests of the workers. And that then creates a tension.

According to Moody (1997) this increased tension has been accompanied by politicization of trade unions, especially confronting the neoliberal government policies. At the global level, however, there is still a reluctance to be too anti-systemic, especially on part of trade unions from the

⁷ Several articles in *Klassekampen* dealt with this issue during the autumn/winter 2004/2005, e.g. 31.01.05

developed countries but also among the officials of the Global Union Federations. This was expressed in the distribution of the movie 'The Globalisation Tapes' (PERBBUNI 2002) which is made by and tells the story of local unions of agricultural workers in Indonesia. The movie was hence a rank-and-file initiative supposed to be part of a series issued by the IUF⁸, the International for among others agricultural workers, to inspire workers worldwide to organize. However, Michael Uwemedimo, one of the filmmakers, told me that the IUF did at first not approve of the anti-capitalist rhetoric of the movie. If the lack of radicalism is to be attributed solely to bureaucratism is, however, open to questioning. Another possible explanation for the difference between unions in the South and unions in the North when it comes to radicalism is the harsher climate for, or even prohibition of, trade union organization in many countries of the South. When unionization is conducted in an environment where death threats are common, leaders must really believe in the cause and are often activists to begin with. Yet another option is that any outright political statement frightens an international labour movement still recovering from the Cold War. In order to bypass the compliance of the bureaucracy, Moody (1997) propagates a rank-and-file internationalism involving networks between local trade union activists, or what he terms social movement unionism. The defining criteria is, according to him, militancy in collective bargaining which centres around demands aiding the whole class, independence from the social democratic parties and alliances with other organizations fighting the cause of the oppressed. However, how he envisages that these networks are to be sustained beyond campaigns around single issues is not explicated on. Another challenge, which Moody does recognize, is that the fear of job loss is strong among the rank and file, and that it acts as a conservative force. According to Wills (2001) this is one of the main problems facing the European Works Councils (EWCs). The economic insecurity and the threat of relocalization hamper relations of trust between the employee representatives in each EWC, and Wills argues that this is testimony to the fact that labour internationalism and solidarity is not automatic, but rather requiring conscious intervention by leaders.

The ideology of social partnership

One of the challenges commonly pointed out by theorists as well as trade unionists today is the difficulty of especially European trade unions in leaving behind the ideological legacy of social partnership. Wahl (2004) even goes as far as to argue that this ideology is leading the trade union movement astray. According to Moody (1997) the social partnership approach dovetails neatly with the corporate shift towards lean production and its emphasis on labour-management cooperation and promotion of positive sum mentality. To counter such mentality, Moody argues that there are no 'win-win' solutions in the relation between capitalists and workers since the latter's income is the former's cost. In tracking the origins of the partnership in the strength of the working class and the threat of socialist revolution, Wahl shows us that as this foundation disappears capital withdraws from the social pact, and starts pursuing a confrontational policy

⁸ International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations.

towards labour. To him the policy of social partnership was a legacy of the particular historical context of Keynesianism and welfare states, and hence ill fit to the changed and hostile political and economic climate. However, due to the achievements of these policies in terms of wages and working conditions in the years following WWII, they gained massive support among workers and in the trade union movement. The improvements in living and working conditions formed a material basis for an ideology of social partnership where confrontation was viewed as counterproductive. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the class compromise can be held responsible for the embourgeoisement and deradicalization of workers, and the depoliticization of the trade unions, or what Draper (ref. Moody 1997) called the domestication of trade unions as tame cats. Wahl (2004) points to the sharp division of responsibility within the labour movement between the party and the trade unions mentioned above as a consequence of the class compromise. The deradicalization implied an acceptance of the capitalist mode of production, and the trade unions guaranteed industrial peace and moderation in demands in return for gains in welfare and working conditions often through collective bargaining agreements (Wahl 2004). The persistence of this approach to trade unionism was recognized by the Sri Lankan delegate, and although his union entered into such agreements, he explicitly stated their limited purpose:

Now, we had a strike which ended with an agreement [...] [where the employer] put at the end: 'The union and the company agreed to cooperate etc. etc. etc'. I said: 'Cut it out. I'm never going to agree to cooperate with your company. I stand my disagreement. But you do your part of the bargain, we do our part. No talk of cooperation. How can I cooperate with your company when your company runs for profits? [...] We don't need to cooperate with you. We'll sign an agreement with you, and I'll tell our members the collective agreement is like the frontier between two nations, or states, once we've signed it - this is our side and this is your side.'

Wahl (2004) claims that the social pact was always a fragile construction depending on a stable economy with high growth rates for its continuance, conditions which were not met from the 1970s onwards. The offensive of capital in response to the economic crises caught the trade unions off guard as negotiations began to centre on cutbacks on previous achievements and existing regulations. Trade unions were hence forced on the defensive, and tried to continue the social partnerships often through compromising their long fought for rights. One outcome of this prostration is that in most Western European countries and in the United States it is now illegal to be involved in international solidarity strikes (Gallin 2002). The delegate from Sri Lanka pointed out the difficulty in exerting any pressure on capital without the weapon of strike:

[Y]ou'll find in Europe, especially in Germany, they sign away their right to strike altogether in their collective agreements [...] If you look at the German collective agreements, they can't strike on an issue of global solidarity for one hour. So what's this of global solidarity? At the last meeting of the ICEM⁹ a Russian delegate said: 'Can't we have a global strike of even one hour?' But you can't have a global strike of even one hour, because a whole number of ICEM unions have signed away their right to strike!

⁹ International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions

Gallin (2002) holds the criminalizing of solidarity strikes to be a great triumph of the right-wing propaganda campaigns against trade unions, and he regards the struggle to recover this right as one of the international struggles most worth conducting. The impossibility of orchestrating an international strike was also mentioned by one of the officials I interviewed, although he also emphasized that the law has not always stopped trade unions before:

[W]hat could be done would be international trade union action. Solidarity action, but unfortunately there is, for example in [the UK], legislation which prohibits that from the 1980s when the Conservative government forbade any international action in support of workers abroad [...] However, the law never stopped trade unions in the past from breaking the law to achieve changes in the law.

On the other hand, he also emphasized that the risk involved in breaking the law is determined by the political and economic climate, which, although varying internationally, is not the best at the moment. However, in its Congress resolution on building a new international trade union confederation, the ICFTU emphasizes that adopting new forms of action cannot be put on hold waiting for the political weather to change, instead suggesting a provoked “global warming” of the climate (ICFTU 2004). The lack of new thinking on part of labour is attributed to not having the proper grasp of power relations and the causes of the current difficulties. This was also pointed out by the delegate from Sri Lanka in a comment to the activities report presented by the General Secretary:

[W]hile we all talk about globalization, while we hear speech after speech of all the effects of globalization, we have no proper understanding of the causes of what we call globalization. We're talking of effects without understanding the causes.

And without any proper understanding of what causes the problems faced, it is difficult to resort to other than mending the effects, what Reinert (2004) likens to palliative treatment. If globalization is conceived of as inevitable, and not as a result of shifts in power relations, then labour's strategies become non-confrontational (Wahl 2004). Hence, when the link between global capitalism and the breakdown of the social pact is not grasped, the trade union strategy becomes an attempt to upscale the policy of social dialogue and partnership from the national level to the global. However, Marx (1865) argued that the working class should not exaggerate the gains made in the everyday struggles through trade unions as they are directed against the effects of capitalism, and not the causes of these effects. The struggle for higher wages and shorter working days detains the downward movement, but it does not change its direction. Marx employed the same analogy from the field of medicine as Reinert (2004) when dealing with trade unions, that is, they are applying palliatives without curing the malady. If the trade unions are to play a different role, they need to substitute the slogan ‘a fair day's wage for a fair day's work’ for ‘abolition of the wages system’ (Marx 1865). Marx thus concludes that although trade unions have great potential in reducing capital's encroachments, they generally fail to go beyond this fire fighting and simultaneously try to change the system through using their organized forces as a lever. The delegate from Sri Lanka pointed to the same challenge:

Labour as such is a product of the capitalist system, so trade unions normally operate within that, and their outlook is of getting something from them, and holding on to what they've already got when they try to take it away. So, I'm not just a trade unionist. In fact, I would describe my union as a mass organization of workers performing trade union functions under the trade union law, but that's not the be all and end all of our organization.

However, there is no consensus that confrontation and militancy is the way forward. Denis MacShane (1999), former official of the International Metal Workers' Federation and currently member of the British Parliament for the Labour Party, speaks in favour of a partnership policy, claiming that the confrontational model is dying and has no future. His argument for doing so is that while the material need and moral claim of trade unions remain valid, their political project should be put to an end for pragmatic reasons – union leaders ought to ask themselves how to best represent the interests of workers. MacShane even argues that if trade unions are to survive they need to accelerate the transition from a confrontational to a partnership model. The argument is substantiated by numerical evidence of national partnership trade unionism has maintained a higher level of organization than those opting for confrontation, and the success of historic compromises in Nordic countries and Switzerland. However, this is the opposite conclusion to the one reached by Callinicos (1995:8): “The Tories and the right wingers in the labour movement would have us believe that people are flooding out of the unions because they can't stand union militants and aren't interested in strike action”. Instead, he argues that the drop in membership rates of formerly militant unions can be attributed to unemployment among workers employed in industries that used to be the stronghold of worker militancy.

A contemporary catchword is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR relates to the ideology of social partnership through upholding a vision of corporations as capable of being socially responsible, and hence a partner in bringing about a more just world. It is often connected to an argument about companies actually profiting from and having interests in embarking upon this road as it results in more productive workers and boosts the image of the company through favourable publicity. What seemed quite paradoxical to me was that the ITGLWF often appeared to have a more positive view of the big brand names and retailers, regarding them to some extent as dialogue partners, while local manufacturers and transnationals further down the supply chain as culprits. This could be seen in several statements, for instance by the General Secretary during his activities report:

[W]e have over the course of the past four years increasingly begun to use [...] the brands and the retailers to put pressure on the manufacturer, on the employer, to ease off their attacks on those who are organizing a union.

However, as recognized by Shanmugaratnam (2004), the room for manoeuvre on part of manufacturers is limited by the pressure exerted by the buyers. The idea of corporate social responsibility did not fall on good ground in the eyes of the Sri Lankan delegate:

So, they talk of a social partnership, social partners, you know all about it. And transnationals are now talking about their social responsibility. I'm going to say to you, the social

responsibility is a substitute for socialism. Accept capitalism, breed on capitalism, but we have social responsibility. So we don't even more need governments, you don't need social responsibility assumed by society, you handle social responsibility through the dominant capitalist institutions in capitalist society – 'We'll manage it for you!'

Wahl (2004) also emphasizes that it is illusory to aim for a new social pact, whether national or global, under the current power relations that are much less favourable to unions. As mentioned above, Wahl connects the understanding of the causes of the present hardship to a qualitatively new approach. The lack of a proper grasp merely leads to an upscaling of the social partnership approach into what Greenfield (ref. Moody 1997) has termed global business unionism. Moody argues that this linking together of the walking wounded, wielding the same weapons that caused their individual defeat, will not win the battle.

The Chinese spectre

Chinese trade unions have been, and still are, ostracized from the global labour movement. This is interesting in two respects. Firstly, in light of the threats posed by China in the post-MFA textile and garment industries, are the reasons given for not letting them partake regarded valid and productive? Secondly, the trade unionists' attitudes towards Chinese workers and unions might be a litmus test of global solidarity. I will first give a brief outline of the Chinese system of industrial relations, before turning to which strategies are being considered by the ITGLWF.

Industrial relations and trade unions in China

Mao can be held as the father of subsequent policies towards trade unions on part of the Communist Party. Mao's (1948) main proposition, based on a two-stage view of the socialist revolution, was that the development of production and the promotion of a flourishing economy is the overriding goal and also in the long term interest of the masses. A narrow focus on workers' welfare harms industry and thus weakens the revolution. He was hence of the opinion that the leaders of trade unions should be taught not to emphasize the partial interests of their workers, but rather establish committees with employers in order to help them increase production, reduce costs and stimulate sales. The Chinese system of industrial relations has hence, since the revolution in 1949, been a 'top-down' adjunct of the wider set of institutional arrangements (Ding et al. 2002). In the heyday of State-Owned Enterprises, workers and managers were seen to have commonality of interest due to the enterprise being 'owned by the whole people'. The transition towards a market economy and the reintegration of China into the world economy has, however, had its impact. The growing divergence of interests ensuing as workers' status become unstable has been expressed in a dramatic increase in the number of labour disputes and industrial actions such as strikes (Clarke et al. 2003). However, such actions are still prohibited, and therefore, in contrast to many other industrial relations systems, they are not organized by trade unions (Warner and Ng 1999). Instead, Chinese trade unions have often assumed the role of preventing social unrest; in the words of a member of the CCP Central Politburo: "[T]he trade unions should strive to maintain national and social stability, guaranteeing the smooth progress of reform" (Clarke et al.

2003:7). The Labour Law of 1994 states that when slowdowns and strikes occur, trade unions shall recover the normal state of production as soon as possible by settling the dispute through cooperation with management or the authorities concerned (Warner and Ng 1999). The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only body permitted to represent Chinese workers, and is, on paper, the largest trade union federation in the world in terms of membership. The political system thus render it nigh impossible to form independent unions, and any attempts to build such unions are vigorously suppressed (Chan 2001, Ding et al. 2002). Although the formation of clandestine unions in China is identified by authors such as Gallin (1997), and several of the speakers at the ITGLWF Congress pointed to this, the dominant sentiment was that no one actually knows exactly what is going on at the grassroots level in China. The blurred boundaries between the different bodies of government, trade unions and enterprises are evident in the personal careers of union leaders, revolving around the positions of party cadre, union leader and enterprise manager. Many even remain as party cadres or administrative managers concurrently after being appointed as trade union cadres, paving the way for mutual collaborative relationships rather than conflicting ones (Baek 2000). And, in general, everyone in an enterprise, including the factory director and party secretary, can join the same union (Ding et al. 2002). However, this is not entirely true because not all the *marginal* workers, such as contract and provisional workers, are eligible for membership, thereby excluding them from all union membership.

Recently China saw the introduction of a new institutional framework for the regulation of industrial relations, in part drawing on the example of the core countries' collective bargaining; the collective consultation between trade unions and employers. However, while the Western notion of collective bargaining entails a 'we/they' distinction, the Chinese version of collective consultation de-emphasizes the conflictual image, and exalts instead the notion of 'industrial partnership' (Warner and Ng 1999). The consent and cooperation of trade unions are hence called for, together with its participation in certain key business decisions of the enterprise. However, this leaves the trade unions in a quandary between supporting management in running economically viable organizations and supporting workers' interests. As a result, they are often endowed with the role of mediator, choosing some middle ground between the two and not representing fully the interests of either. Nevertheless, the ACFTU has made a series of efforts to strengthen the status of trade unions and to protect workers' interests lately. ACFTU officials have for instance recognized that enterprise trade unions need to become more independent of management if they are to defend the interests of workers. According to the ILO (2000) it is a major advance that the ACFTU has now explicitly stated that one of its key objectives is to improve the living and working conditions for members. However, there is little reason to be overtly optimistic, given that the new Trade Union Law of 2001 enjoined ACFTU to take economic development as the central task, while safeguarding the rights and interests of workers is secondary.

The great paradox is, however, how much industrial relations in China resembles what is propagated by the advocates of lean production. According to Moody (1997) the programs of the latter include labour-management cooperation to improve competitiveness while fostering a 'win-

win' mentality. What differs is that in the case of China there is a meticulous degree of state intervention and control where the procedural norms are designed centrally thus leaving agreements in enterprises to vary only in local detail. On the other hand, The Workers' Conference system, which was introduced in 1956 and has had strong influence on industrial relations to date, involved formal representation, though little or no input, of workers in actual decision-making, taking more the form of workers being informed on reports made by the leaders of the enterprise (Chossudovsky 1986). The parallels to the European Works Councils here are quite clear (Wills 2001).

China and the international labour movement

The official policy of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) towards China has been underpinned by a political rhetoric reflecting the Cold War. The formation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in 1945 signalled only a fragile unity between communist and non-communist trade unions. The hatchet was not buried, and the split led to the formation of ICFTU as an organization in direct opposition to the by now explicitly pro-Soviet WFTU. From then on until recently the history of international trade unionism was dominated by this conflict. Whether the international labour movement has been able to rise above it will be seen in the case of China. The ICFTU chose to emphasize the word '*free*' in its name, and besides helping to improve working and living conditions, standing guard for the free-world ideology became an important part of its *raison d'être* (Munck 2002). The tense relationship to Chinese unions culminated in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 leading to an official ICFTU edict of non-association remaining in force until 1992 (Haworth and Hughes 2002). With the Cold War behind, however, the conflict has been downplayed, and the ICFTU has according to Munck (2002) finally taken a more balanced stance towards global capitalism, a matter I will return to. The ICFTU was forced to reconsider the case of state-led Chinese trade unions through its involvement in the regional integration processes in Asia, and there have been attempts at a dialogue. The most hard-hitting critique of these dialogues comes from the former General Secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF), Dan Gallin (1997). He argues that what is at stake is not some age old principles, but rather the fact that the ACFTU is not a trade union, but an instrument of the state that oppresses workers. Gallin's critique is amplified by his reference to the warnings issued by an activist in the Chinese independent trade union movement that any recognition, even tacit, of the ACFTU might inflict a severe set-back in the fight for independent trade unions. In addition, those inside the ACFTU who now recognize the need for change might be muted by such an acceptance, as it justifies the status quo.

The issue of China figures high on the agenda of the ITGLWF now that the quotas have been lifted, and it was on everybody's lips during the 9th World Congress. Although there was more talk of how big a challenge it constitutes, some concrete strategies were proposed. To date, the ITGLWF has been following the standard set by the ICFTU:

The ITGLWF had for many years a policy of not having contact with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Not because we didn't want to have contact with workers in China, but because all the evidence pointed to the fact that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was not a free and democratic trade union organization, that in the main it was not in contact with its members - workers had no idea that they belonged to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. [It] appeared to be no more than an arm of the ruling party and the government in power, in a sense of a transmission belt for instructions from party and government to the workers. We saw repeatedly in our sectors of industry that where workers took action that rather than being supported by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions they were actually trampled on by that organization.

(The General Secretary in his activities report)

This is more or less in accordance with what much of the literature on industrial relations in China tells us. Despite the difficult conditions, however, there is a surging resistance, and this was recognized by the General Secretary:

China is now seeing an enormous amount of industrial unrest, tens of thousands of strikes every year, many of them in the textile, clothing and leather sector. And in most of those places the All-China Federation of Trade Unions is not to be seen, and if it is to be seen it is taking the side of the authorities. But, of course, we have to recognize what is happening; that China has become the leader of the textile, clothing and footwear industries of the world [...] And it is clear that we have to engage in China, the question is how do we do it?

The answer he gave to that question is to engage in activities at grassroots level in China. He acknowledged that there are what he called 'genuine trade union activities' at the factory level and the ITGLWF has decided upon sending a mission to China aiming to draw the attention of workers and management to how far short they are falling on international labour standards. Among the delegates there was a broad consensus on the need to establish contact with Chinese trade unionists, and the delegates from the Dominican Republic emphasized the importance of giving full support to Chinese workers in their efforts at organizing. As already mentioned the delegates from India emphasized that uncertainty cannot be a guiding light:

[N]obody knows what is the reality [...] There is a need for people from China to come and say for themselves. Now, exactly what is the reality in India - we can say that, but somebody from another country cannot say what reality is India, because we are facing this anyway. That is why if somebody from China had a presence here they could say what the situation in the Chinese textile industry is.

Several of my informants did however also point out that China should not be hyped up, with their arguments ranging from China's massive growth not being sustainable to the inevitable emergence of trade unions. The General Secretary doubted the sustainability:

[F]arm prices have gone up, which means it's more attractive for people to stay on the land [...] This coupled with the horror stories that were coming from workers that had already migrated suggested that this year less, many less people are making the treks South, which has meant labour shortages in some factories [...]. And that almost inevitably will mean increases in wages and hopefully improvements in working conditions, and indeed I saw the other day that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions which often doesn't talk about this, had talked about the need for wages to increase, that labour shortages were caused by low wages and by

poor working conditions. So, that's the other side. It's likely many will begin to source from China – but will China be able to sustain it?

The consequences for Chinese competitiveness of labour shortages and subsequent upward pressures on wages were also dealt with in an article in the Norwegian newspaper Dagens Næringsliv (27.08.2004). In addition, an article in Morgenbladet (19.-25.11.2004) on working conditions in China reported on the drying up of labour supply due to the bad reputation of factory work. The delegate from Sri Lanka recognized some of the same aspects as he claimed that if the working conditions get poor enough, then trade unions will inevitably form:

[Y]ou will find that just as happened in other capitalist countries, when there is industrial development for a market, then trade unions can flourish.

However, I have earlier stated that China might prove a litmus test for global trade unionism both when it comes to transcending old divisions within the international labour movement and global solidarity. Although most of what was said pointed in a positive direction, the sense of emergency coupled with an ideology of social partnership also led to statements like this made by the General Secretary of the ITGLWF's regional organization for Latin America¹⁰:

[F]or this new era of trade liberalisation at the world level, it is necessary for **employers and workers to find mechanisms of agreement and cooperation** to face the threat imposed by products from China [...] I thought to myself how different things would be today if [...] **workers were organised in strong, representative unions**. Of course it would be different! We would have workers and companies fighting together for their industry and employment sources.

(emphasis in original)

The strong national orientation, coupled with the ideology of social partnership, has also led parts of the European trade union movement into asymmetric alliances with 'national' capital where they form the junior partner, or are assigned the role of transmission belts of lean production (Moody 1997, Wahl 2004). Wahl offers us the example of German unions buying into capital's efforts to become competitive by accepting poorer working conditions in exchange for job security. This form of national business unionism should, however, not be replaced by a global business unionism (Moody 1997, Wahl 2004). The question hence arises what accounts for such actions and how they impact upon global trade unionism.

¹⁰ <http://www.itglwf.org/displaydocument.asp?DocType=Report&Language=&Index=1065> Printed 15.03.2005

GLOBAL UNIONS AS A SOCIAL FORCE

During the formal opening of the 8th World Congress of the ITGLWF in Norrköping in 2000 the President of the Swedish LO expressed the future tasks as follows:

The free movement of capital, striving for maximum profits, makes it necessary for us, as workers, to mobilise, acting all over the world. If we are to respond to these major and difficult challenges we must be strong and also strengthen our global cooperation. No organisation, nation, region or industry is strong enough to manage this on its own. And friends, we have the necessary tools. We have to keep them clean, sharp, and use them in the right way. We have and we need international trade union solidarity.

(ITGLWF 2000:2)

He thus questioned, in line with Radice (2001), what *national* alternative there is to global capitalism given the ever-deeper integration of national economies. As seen in the previous chapters the possibility of reverting to some form of autarky is regarded as difficult at best, and reactionary and counterproductive at worst. Radice (2001) further argues that the contemporary global capitalism is characterized by a non-congruence between both the economic interests and political influence of labour on the one hand and capital on the other. The merit of seeking state power is hence questioned, with authors such as Arrighi et al. (1989) calling for an internationalism transcending the inter-state system. Moreover, although both trade unions and governments might be seduced by the short term benefits to be gained from competition for inward investment, according to Breitenfellner (1997), the very existence of the former is jeopardized by such behaviour. He thus regards the imperative of global trade unionism as following from the rationale of unionism itself, and although retracting into a national shell might be the natural reaction, Gallin (1997:unnumbered) calls for unions to “think and react logically, not instinctively”. Furthermore, accumulation by dispossession has, according to Harvey (2003), subjected most of the world to the capitalist logic leading to a global working class of an unprecedented size (Ruccio et al. 1991, Smith 2000, Munck 2002, Castree et al. 2004). Lately, both as a result of these globalizing tendencies and neoliberal onslaught on workers’ organizations, there has been an increased focus on global trade union cooperation (Moody 1997, Wills 1998, Waterman and Wills 2001, Munck 2002). However, as recognized by Wills (2001), trade unionism at the global level is much less theorized than at the local and national. I have up until now dealt with them as objects with certain properties and liabilities regardless of geographical scale. However, the geographical scale at which a union is trying to organize matters as regards which mechanisms and pressures are affecting its operation. At the global level the issues dealt with so far enter the picture to a greater extent than at other levels; uneven development, nationality, solidarity, who to exert pressure upon and what to aim at. I will in what follows delve more deeply into some of the challenges and opportunities of global unions.

In order to answer the question posed at the end of the previous chapter regarding the reason why some unions embark upon a national competitiveness approach and how this impacts

upon global trade unionism, we need to return to Olle and Schoeller (1977). According to them, the economism of trade unions already explicated on breeds national protectionism at the global level. As already mentioned, their point of departure was what they call a euphoric evaluation of the opportunities for internationalisation of trade union activity. The euphoria is based on the assumption that the rise of TNCs has provided the objective conditions to supersede the division of the trade union movement into national fractions. This they regard as problematic in several respects, the most important of which is the economism; that is, the assumption that trade unions should mirror the organizational structure of the corporations. Olle and Schoeller (1977) do not only emphasize the difference between social and economic conditions, but they also regard the economic euphoria as bringing a risk of unconsciously reproducing the national division among workers in its trail, and thereby the competition between them. If trade unions merely respond to economic objective conditions, internationalism can never be anything else than a last resort in periods when national trade unions are relatively weak and upscale only to defend already established national conditions. In other words, the content of international trade unionism can be reduced to a form of 'national protectionism'. Against this background, trade union internationalisation is held as a condition for the survival of national trade unions and maintenance of current conditions, and Olle and Schoeller (1977) recognize, like Galtung (1974), a specific conflict between workers of advanced capitalist countries and newly industrializing ones. Olle and Schoeller argue that relocation to low-wage countries will have detrimental effects upon trade union internationalization due to the impossibility of establishing an identity of economic interests across the wage gap. Their conclusion is thus that any attempt at promoting internationalism on purely economic grounds can only reproduce the competition between the different conditions of production pertaining to nations. The only way to transcend this latent national fractionalization is, according to Olle and Schoeller, by politicizing trade union activity through combining the struggle for economic improvements with a perspective of developing the power of the proletariat. In this they seem to agree with Gramsci's critique of the separation of economics and politics (Sassoon 1987) and Lenin's complaint about the economism of trade unions (Harding 1996), elevating the critique to the world level. I will return to the issue of politicization later in this chapter.

On the other hand, almost three decades have passed since Olle and Schoeller (1977) published their article. And it is interesting that both their article and Galtung's is written in the 1970s, the decade in which Harvey (2003) traces the intensification of accumulation by dispossession. Given the inertia recognized by the delegate from Sri Lanka quoted as saying that while capital acts, labour reacts might imply that they were writing on the brink of major changes. Although Olle and Schoeller's argument regarding economism and national protectionism still seems to have some relevance, their assertion that an analysis based on social conditions leads to a markedly different conclusion might be contested. Their argument is that the social relations existent at their time restrict any attempt at trade union internationalisation. Their conclusion is not that international trade union structures can never be effective, but they do not find any empirical evidence in support of the view that social relations equivalent to an extensive internationalisation of accumulation and reproduction of capital came into existence in the 1960s.

In other words, they still regard the mode of accumulation to be based mainly on expanded reproduction within nation-states. This is in contradistinction to Ruccio et al.'s (1991) and Radice's (2001) view that global capitalism implies the globalization of both the material *and social* relations of capitalism, of accumulation and class formation.

Regarding the ideology of social partnership, Wahl (2004) argues that the former policy of class compromise and peaceful settlement between capital and labour within national borders to a large extent confined the trade union movement to the national level, that is, rendering global cooperation a pro forma activity. Internationalism was in other words reduced to diplomacy and lobbying international bodies, such as the ILO. The question thus arises whether the further development of global capitalism has had any impact upon the possibilities for global trade unionism. According to the General Secretary of the ITGLWF there have been profound changes to global unions since he was appointed:

I think it's totally changed. [N]ot just in the way we work, but in what we actually do. In the past [...] what were described as International Trade Secretariats - yeah, they brought together unions from different parts of the world, but their main function was to sort of liaison with the international agencies like the ILO, this sort of thing. Moving from a national trade union to the international level, at the beginning, for me was quite a change, because there was no contact whatsoever with companies [...] 16 years on, I would say, probably more than half my time is spent in dealing with companies.

The issue of a changed agenda figured in most of my interviews with officials in the ITGLWF as well as in their reports. Most of them highlighted, like the General Secretary, the increased attention given to companies leading to proactive and pragmatic activities, while others pointed more to the politicization involved in building alliances with NGOs and other trade unions. I will deal with these separately in what follows.

Getting Global Unions to a proactive and pragmatic place?

The official in the ITGLWF having transnational corporations as his field of responsibility lamented the usual reactive approach of trade unions in general, and global unions in particular:

[O]ne of the problems of trade unions, just fundamentally, is that they are still by and large reactive organizations - and they have a lot to react against. However, the problem with that role they are forced into is that it provides very little slack to be proactive and to think about other ways that the economy could be run, or the sector could be run.

As he is quoted as saying earlier, he regarded the era of pious statements about international solidarity at congresses, while the daily practice was predominantly about responding to reports of violations, as being too abstract and centred only on reactive fire fighting. The new focus on companies and building networks in advance of disputes was hence regarded a step in the direction of being involved in more concrete and proactive work. Related to the statement made by the General Secretary in a previous chapter about a new form of solidarity, Waterman (2001) emphasizes the need to shift from an 'aid model' to a 'solidarity model'. The latter implies multidirectional flows of information and experiences, and often presupposes a move from verbal

declarations to creative work based on the daily needs of working people. The shortcomings of the old approach to global trade unionism was also recognized by Mike Allen¹¹ in his address to the 8th World Congress of the ITGLWF (2000:109):

I tend to have a view when people talk about international trade union solidarity, [...] I tend to think [...] of the traditional response, that is, sending a telegram or a telex or an e-mail in protest about a labour right's violation or to express solidarity in support with workers in dispute. That is the traditional model of solidarity. And it has to change. I don't think that global solidarity is enough any more, we need global coordination on a daily basis, we need global organisation, and I think that is what we are talking about here today, global structures. We need global action. We need to get away from the fire fighting approach.

As seen in the quote above, the General Secretary held one of the main changes to be the increased involvement with companies, and one of the officials I interviewed argued that this change was of great importance:

[Y]ou can be a trade union, you can be a very prominent trade union, but you're nothing until you have a relationship with an employer who has recognized you as the representative of the workers, 'cause it's only then that things start to change for the workers, because they have a voice – a collective voice as opposed to an individual one.

Two global trade union strategies having companies as a point of departure is Global Framework Agreements (GFAs) and company networks, the latter being an older invention than the first. GFAs are negotiated between management and labour and set down some basic labour standards, including all the ILO core labour standards. While there are few conclusions of GFAs, many scholars as well as trade unionists regard them as important both as a new tool and as learning ground for a reinvigorated global trade union movement (Tørres and Gunnes 2002). Although the ITGLWF has not signed any GFA yet, they put quite an effort into doing so. Among the recognized merits of GFAs were the fact that they are not unilaterally introduced like codes of conduct or corporate social responsibility initiatives, require full disclosure of the subcontracting chains, and that they take freedom of association as a point of departure, thus ensuring everyday monitoring by local trade unions. Although they resemble collective bargaining, they are much more modest and act more as frameworks within which national trade unions can negotiate further agreements. For the Global Union Federations the agreements hence ensure that their affiliates share a common starting point (Tørres and Gunnes 2002). Company networks imply exchanging information, holding meetings, coordination of action and campaigning. Quite apart from the agreements themselves are the change they, together with building company networks, imply in global trade unionism. The official responsible for dealing with transnational corporations was highly optimistic about what the attempts at signing GFAs and building networks could bring to the global trade union movement:

We're genuine about building a world-wide network within this company. And what we're about is getting from A to B, and so, I mean, there have been set-backs but we have had movement. You talk about trade union *movement*, so if it's moving it has to be going from

¹¹ A researcher at Cranfield School of Management working mainly on strategic trade union management

somewhere to some place else. And very often trade unions are reactive bodies, they're trying to fire fight all the time, and it's about trying to get them into a proactive place. And the only way to do that is first having a program which is proactive, and then engaging in an activity which does that. And I think one of the interesting things about working at the level of multinationals is that I think it gives you an opportunity to do that.

The ICFTU (2004) states the same objective, transcending the old approach to solidarity of reacting to and providing help when problems arise, to a proactive day-to-day support. In addition, both the GFAs and the company networks were, by the official, seen as contributions to making global trade unionism more concrete and thus present in the everyday life of workers, matters regarded important by Bakunin (year unknown). Moody (1997) criticized the official trade union internationalism for being labour bureaucracy three times removed, and hence far removed from the realities of the workplace, although admitting that the Global Union Federations are closer to the day-to-day reality than the ICFTU. Moreover, Moody also argues that it is this bureaucracy which leads the official trade union internationalism to focus mainly on lobbying other international agencies. As was seen in the quote above, the General Secretary maintained that trade union internationalism is 'totally changed' due to an increased focus upon companies. Additionally, the importance of engaging, if not the grassroots, the local trade unions were also recognized by both the official quoted above and the General Secretary in his activities report:

Four years ago, or whatever it was, we didn't set out to have [...] a statement from a company that they will cooperate and be partners with this global union federation. We believe that Global Framework Agreements have to be something different, something more than that, that they have to replicate the agreements at the plant level, at the national level and create an extension of those agreements from the plant level to national level and to the global level [...] We haven't attempted to approach companies straight up and say 'let's have an agreement', instead we've ensured by building a network that [...] the issues are understood not just by us but by each of the unions who represents workers across that multinational. And through pressure from the bottom and not pressure from the top we move the situation of getting into discussions and negotiations with the companies concerned.

Moody (1997) also praises these activities on part of Global Union Federations, especially the building of company networks as they ensure the incorporation of plant level representatives hence bringing them closer to the rank and file. The ambition to reach the local level and to have as concrete agreements as possible was furthermore identified by the General Secretary as a reason why the ITGLWF has not been able to sign a GFA yet:

I think it could have been relatively easy to sign paper agreements with a number of companies. I believe it is more so with some of the retailers and brand names [...] rushing around all willing to sign anything [...] provided it is sufficiently general, and provided it doesn't tie them down to very much. We didn't think that was really to the benefit of our affiliates, to the benefit of workers in the sector. We felt it was much better to deal with them [...] from the bottom up - establishing networks between the different plants, between the different unions, seeing the issues there, and having the pressure come from within the companies rather than [...] agreements between two international, or multinational, organizations.

Criticizing what he terms ‘bureaucratic internationalism’, that is, the sole focus upon lobbying for the inclusion of minimum labour standards in trade agreements at the highest level, Wahl (2000) instead proposes more of a rank-and-file internationalism. He argues like Bakunin (year unknown) and Hyman (1999) that solidarity does not rise automatically, but has to be built through concrete praxis. Wahl (2000:unnumbered, my translation) thus agrees with the General Secretary that the way forward at the global level is a coordination of rank-and-file activities and letting the pressure come from the bottom and not from the top: “organizing, rank-and-file struggles and a gradually developing coordination of trade union actions across borders are the only ways to traverse in order to combat the threat of globalization”. He further maintains that the building of international networks within transnational corporations is a pivotal activity to be engaged in. However, a challenge is, according to Wahl, that some national trade unions do not accept these networks unless they are involved. Here we reach an intersection between the division between rank and file and the trade union bureaucracy on the one hand and solidarity on the other. If the bureaucracy is, like Luxemburg (1906) and Callinicos (1995) argue, a social group with interests of its own, then solidarity might have quite different meanings to them. As recognized by Bakunin (year unknown) the central organizations take an ideal or abstract notion as their point of departure, while the masses start out from more concrete facts and circumstances. Although the central organizations have a major role to play in propagandizing internationalism, and igniting, coordinating and sustaining trade union actions, Bakunin (year unknown:unnumbered) fears for their impotence: “all questions would perpetually be discussed, including of course the question of organization of labor, but without the slightest attempt being made to carry it into practice, nor even having the possibility of doing it”. The importance of drawing in the masses is substantiated by the anti-systemic objective of the labour movement: “If the international were made up only of Central Sections, the latter probably would have succeeded by now in forming conspiracies for the overthrow of the present order of things; but such conspiracies would be confined only to mere intentions [...] in order to overthrow and destroy the political and social order [...], it would be necessary to have the co-operation of [the millions of proletarians]” (Bakunin year unknown:unnumbered). This was recognized by one of the officials I interviewed:

I think it’s only when you confront people at that sort of emotional level of listening to another worker. You know, you can have onerous speeches [on] the benefits of international solidarity and bla, bla – it’s all just empty stuff, well, it’s not empty, they *mean* it, but it doesn’t mean anything to workers unless they too have experienced it.

This is in accordance with Bakunin’s (year unknown:unnumbered) proposition that only a small number of individuals can be carried away by abstract ideas: “the mass of workers who are forced to live from hand to mouth [...] apprehend the evils from which they suffer precisely and exclusively in the context of this particular reality but never or scarcely ever in their general aspect”. As the General Secretary is quoted as saying above, the ITGLWF aspires to translate global solidarity from being merely a glib phrase into a practical reality, and the way to do that is through building networks:

[W]e will have to further develop our organizing techniques, coordinating our efforts through individual companies, their subsidiaries, contractors and subcontractors. Increasingly these activities will have to be conducted across national frontiers, requiring improved coordination and cooperation continually and worldwide.

(ITGLWF 2000:22)

The delegates from the Dominican Republic maintained that the ITGLWF “is getting into a very important stage” as it shows a real interest in exerting pressure upon transnational corporations, and the official responsible for the work on transnational corporations explained the novelty of the approach as follows:

[I]f I go to an international trade union conference on multinationals, we’ll be exchanging information about our relative experience and that, but at the end of the day I will go back maybe a wiser person and I’ll be able to feed that back in, but as far as concrete trade unionism is concerned I’m not sure if it has advanced it very much other than maybe armed me a little bit more for how I am going to work in the future. Where I get a sense of some *movement*, which is what it’s supposed to be, is that when you bring workers together in a company, for the first time you’re creating something very special, you know, globally. There is a focus, and it is relevant to what everybody is saying and doing.

Both Global Framework Agreements and company networks might to some extent help translate the abstract ideas into more tangible and concrete matters and actions. However, neither of them is a miracle drug. Global trade unionism was still, despite being more involved in concrete praxis, criticized for being too abstract and conceptual by the delegate from Sri Lanka:

I recently spoke at a seminar under the auspices of the ILO. There they were talking of the concept of decent work [...] I said: “You operate with concepts of what should be decent work – security of employment, good conditions to all at work et cetera’. But I said: ‘That’s only a concept – what’s the reality? You know, we are a country that is predominantly Buddhist, and one of the sayings of Buddha was: ‘may all beings be without suffering’ [...] But if all of us followed the example of Buddhists we wouldn’t need the ILO!’ So these are all just concepts. But in reality, to what extent are those concepts applied and applicable in a class society?

This leads us back to the ideology of social partnership of which he regarded Global Framework Agreements to be part. His critique can be substantiated by referring to statements depicting the negotiation of GFAs as “a process of social dialogue for further advances” (Tørres and Gunnes 2002:2). In the education pack for use with the ITGLWF video we find similar statements:

Because the only dependable way to ensure a *decent employment relationship* for workers [...] is through recognised trade unions and collective bargaining [...], it is vital that we enter into *dialogue* with global companies to establish [Global] Framework Agreements.

(ITGLWF 2002:25, emphasis added)

In the introduction written by the General Secretary it is also stated that “the real task here is to engage global companies and to make them *accountable*” (ITGLWF 2002:4, emphasis added). The Agenda for Action also posits dialogue with companies to be an aim for the ITGLWF (ITGLWF 2004a). On the other hand, it is also possible to regard them as the best option available for

bettering the plight of workers internationally, an assertion even the delegate from Sri Lanka indicated. That attempts are made to translate the approach into something more than rhetoric could be seen in the substantiation given by the General Secretary of why he did not want the ITGLWF to rush for paper statements:

[W]e are not interested in just a single line statement “XYZ transnational company will cooperate with the ITGLWF in order to bring about improvements in wages and working conditions”. Frankly, I think that’s hot air. Some people may feel that it’s an advance, maybe it can be used as a steppingstone. But we wanted to work more on building, first of all building networks between the unions at plant level and at national level involved in a particular company. So the pressure comes from below, and then move on where there’s pressure for global arrangements.

The building of networks is hence regarded as prior to the negotiation and signing of Global Framework Agreements. However, much disagreement about the merits of signing GFAs will not lead to many conclusions, and although the aim is to benefit workers in the South in particular, where the legal protection of workers’ rights is weaker, they are not welcomed with open arms in all quarters. Among the delegates I interviewed, and all of them were from the South, about half of them expressed scepticism towards the gains to be made from GFAs, the grounds for which ranged from being too time- and capacity consuming in monitoring to, as mentioned, being part of a counterproductive ideology. A third critique was offered by one of the delegates I interviewed from Bangladesh:

Global Framework Agreements, in my opinion, are no good [...] In reality, we can observe that only the rich countries can follow the points and rules of these agreements, but it is very tough for the poor countries to follow the rules [...] So the poor countries do not have much advantage from it.

In this quote we can clearly see a conception of the challenges posed by uneven development when it comes to minimum standards, but the General Secretary attributed some of the scepticism and difficulty of GFAs and networks to them being relatively new concepts. There is a possibility that the quoted delegate might have confused GFAs with a social clause in the WTO as he uses the word ‘country’ and ‘rules’ and not ‘company’. The General Secretary regretted the difficulty of keeping communication going, and lack of information can prevent a positive attitude towards new initiatives. When I asked the General Secretary whether he considered uneven development a great challenge, he pointed out the particular situation in the textile and garment industries:

[I]n our sector [...] rich and poor in terms of national wealth doesn’t have a lot of bearing on the industry. Indeed, it may be the reverse to what happens elsewhere. Because as countries develop you tend to find that they lose their textile and clothing industry – as soon as wages begin to increase, the industry moves on elsewhere. We often say the industry has been a bit like the loggers in the rainforest. It comes in, chops down the trees and moves on, leaving often nothing but waste behind.

Thus, the other half of the delegates I interviewed displayed an opposite view of GFAs and the delegate from Mauritius looked upon them as exclusively positive. He argued that minimum

standards in framework agreements will help put brakes on this downward spiral of wages and working conditions, as well as having the advantage of not being unilaterally introduced. The delegates from the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, emphasized more the work on GFAs as testimony to the ITGLWF's willingness to act, as it

shows that the International has clear policies toward a counteraction against the 'savage market' brought on by the globalization; in order to diminish it, to control it somehow, trying to establish a minimum respect of those rights. In this line, the International's role has been widening.

Quite apart from the pros and contras of GFAs is the practical challenge of getting affiliates to pull together, and one of the officials I interviewed gave me examples of national unions willing to engage internationally on their own accord, but who were less forthcoming when the activities were conceived by and orchestrated through the ITGLWF. Moody (1997), criticizing union leaders from advanced capitalist countries, argues that while they were quick to send delegations and messages of solidarity, the concrete practices of building cross-border networks and alliances have remained a low priority. He thus argues that although the Global Union Federations could have had a large role to play, this is forestalled by the nationalism of the strongest affiliates. The delegate from Sri Lanka regarded the Western European affiliates as way too powerful due both to custom and their much larger financial contributions to the ITGLWF than their sister organizations from the South. He substantiated this by referring to the fact that the General Secretaries, the Presidents and much of the research staff of the GUFs are either European, North American or Japanese. In the case of the ITGLWF the two leading positions, the General Secretary and the President, are Irish and German respectively, and the organization is based in Brussels. And, like Moody (1997), he held this bias to be the main reason for the social partnership approach. On the other hand, the Indian delegates, although acknowledging the importance of economic leverage, thought that their time might be coming due to the power in numbers:

Developed countries have more power only financially. They have funds with them, but they don't have members with them. For example if you take ITGLWF, developing countries and underdeveloped countries we have the numbers in garments and textiles. How many textiles and garment workers have they in Europe? Very few! So without the money they cannot do anything [...] Maybe later it is India who will have the person outward.

As was seen in the fourth chapter, the General Secretary also lamented the difficulty of obtaining the whole-hearted support of unions from the home country of targeted transnationals. Although cases are a delicate matter, one of the officials I interviewed gave me a briefing on some attempts at signing GFAs and building networks within companies. One question pertains to the issue of representation; who should be the signatory in agreements with transnational corporations? Although the General Secretary regarded this as a remaining challenge, he also pointed out advancements made:

[S]hould the representatives of thousands of members in one country determine the terms and conditions or the general approach of the company to its workforce in respect of 100,000

elsewhere? It's not logical and it doesn't make sense. And nor do I think it is accepted by unions representing workers in the other countries. But there's still [...] the comment [...] that while the multinational companies abandoned nationality and such like a long time ago, unions are still quite a lot bound, you know, they hold on to their passports. That, I think, is beginning to change. And that's why we begin to find ourselves more and more dealing directly with companies.

One of the officials I interviewed also emphasized the inappropriateness of one national union signing an international agreement on behalf of other national unions. Another question concerns different approaches to employers, and Buhlungu and Webster (2002) recognize this as a major challenge under global capitalism. They maintain that the current pressures are contradictory as competitiveness on the one hand is pushing labour towards cooperative relationships with employers, while it on the other requires opposition. Consequently, Buhlungu and Webster conclude that whether and how these contradictory pressures are reconciled will decide the future of labour internationalism. One of the officials I interviewed agreed and held that although there are not many barriers to global trade unionism:

where the barriers occur is often when you start to interface with the employers. There may be different relationships which exist, to some extent effected by national characteristics, between the companies and the worker reps – in some cases it might be more dialogue based than confrontation.

He also regarded this as one of the main reasons why one attempt at a framework agreement failed. In the example offered, the employer had proposed a draft agreement which the ITGLWF thought was neither international nor an agreement with the company. When the employer pulled out of talks they reported the state of play to their affiliates in Southern Africa where the attitude was much more militant than that of the workers in the headquarters country. The union in the headquarters country felt they were unable to take the militant fight to the owner on headquarters soil:

[T]here was a sense from our headquarters union that the agreement on offer was the best we could get and that the ITGLWF was passing up an opportunity. The ITGLWF was, however, not prepared to sign up to such a deal.

Returning to Olle and Schoeller (1977), they treat company networks, or World Corporation Councils as they term them, as subject to the same national protectionism as international trade unionism in general. They thus maintain that networks will only function in periods where the protectionist interests of the trade unions involved coincide. This leads them to the proposition that since the gap between the economic interests of unions from the affluent and the poor countries cannot be bridged, building networks across this divide will be fraught with conflicts. Olle and Schoeller (1977:71, emphasis in original) hence depict two possible directions: “either in the direction of a subjective ‘nationalisation’ of the trade-union movement, consisting of conscious competition between workers of different nations [...], or in the direction of a *politicisation* of trade-union activity combining the struggle for the maintenance and raising of the level of reproduction of the commodity labour power with the perspective of developing the power of the proletariat.”

Politicization – taking on the neoliberal agenda

According to Gallin (1999) the depoliticization of the trade union movement in the period 1950-1980 had a paralyzing effect upon trade unions thus necessitating a repoliticization. The mass political strikes around the world in the mid-1990s and the demonstrations in Seattle in 1999 spurred a massive debate on what became known as the anti-globalization movement, but it also, due to labour's involvement in the movement, gave rise to perspectives on the renewal of trade unions. The catchword for much of this literature was *social movement unionism*, characterized by a move beyond the traditional workplace related issues and the formation of alliances with other civil society movements, hence having both a new focus and a new mode of operation (Lambert and Webster 2001). Callinicos (2003), being highly critical of the term anti-globalization as the movement itself is and should remain global, proposes instead an anti-capitalist movement with trade unions as vanguard. He justifies vanguardism by maintaining that the importance of class is its relationship to power. Given that capital is a social relation, that is, the profits of the capitalists are derived from the exploitation of wage-labour, workers wield a strong weapon in withdrawing, and as long as capitalism exists, the working class remains an agent of social transformation. The alliance is held to benefit both parties as the trade unions might see an upsurge in membership and an opportunity to go onto the offensive against lean production, while the social movements gain a social weight they would otherwise lack. A synergy effect could also be attained in the combination of the anti-capitalist movement's vitality and militancy with the class outlook of trade unions:

Some [NGOs] have done tremendous, absolutely tremendous work campaigning, doing research, and advocating workers' rights and liaising with the labour movement [...] and some unions have engaged in quite imaginative things, but I would say that there have been some very, very clever NGO campaigns run. It's about time and energy. You know, there's only so much a union can do; it constantly has to look over its members and the members are in workplaces. Some NGOs, like Clean Clothes Campaign, take the issue to the streets [...] while we are too busy defending so-and-so, you know, it's about recognising that and working together [...] Now, what is interesting is that the companies are keen to have the NGOs involved. For obvious reasons – it keeps us down.

ITGLWF Official

In most of the literature on social movement unionism, however, there is a tendency to contrast this 'new internationalism' with the official labour internationalism of Global Union Federations. An important question is hence to what extent the latter has seen any politicization. Moody (1997:230) argues, in the case of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions that its "[o]bsession with the Cold War, national myopia, and distance from workplace realities and new struggles [...] have left [it] unable to comprehend, let alone develop or even discuss a strategy toward internationalized lean production, the global job crisis, or the world-wide corporate competitiveness agenda [...] So far, at least, it has seen a shift to the right in the politics". Although there is a large amount of truth in this, we saw above that the delegates from the Dominican Republic rather than regarding the new activities embarked upon by the ITGLWF as a

deradicalization, saw them as “clear policies”, or a concretization, in the struggle against the “savage market”.

On the eve of 2005, however, the ICFTU merged with the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) issuing on that occasion a new agenda for action called *Globalizing Solidarity: Building a Global Union Movement for the Future*, the first chapter of which is termed *A World to Change* (ICFTU 2004). Although the historic mission of trade unionism is defined as the struggle to impose regulation in order to control the operation of markets, the vision of the ICFTU is proclaimed to be a world with social justice. Furthermore, the need to construct a *political project* to transform globalization and harness trade union strength towards building an effective workers’ counterweight against neoliberalism is emphasized. The outlook is hence not anti-globalization as “injustices [...] did not begin with globalization and will not be abolished by ending globalization” (ICFTU 2004:7). Among the principles for the new international trade union organization it is stated that the “Confederation is convinced that furthering [its] values [...] calls for a trade union movement capable of social transformation” (ICFTU 2004:49). Regarding social movements, it is explicitly stated that the ICFTU and the Global Union Federations have strived, and will continue to strive for building alliances with them especially through the World Social Forum. A triangular alliance between trade unions, like-minded political groupings and civil society organizations is hence proposed to in the establishment of a substantive political project provoking a “global warming” in the hegemonic political climate. On the other hand, however, expanding the ‘global social dialogue’ is also regarded an objective.

Turning to the Global Union Federations, Breitenfellner (1997) puts his faith in them as the way forward for global trade unionism, since they, unlike the labour diplomacy of the ICFTU, are pragmatic, front-line organizations involved in constructive activities. Moody (1997), however, points to the constraints of being a federation that like the speed of a convoy is determined by its slowest ship, the federations cannot venture far beyond where the most influential affiliates are willing to go. However, Gallin (1999), formerly General Secretary of the IUF, refutes this contention and maintains that the full-time officials of the GUFs have a stronger mandate to act in the general interest of the organization than is often supposed. In addition, even though having national members is regarded as a limitation, Gallin argues that they display a quite sharp perception of internationalism as their daily experiences of global capitalism and transnationals intensify. Moody (1997) does, on the other hand, acknowledge that the GUFs have developed, with some of them becoming more activist through involvement in campaigns. The ITGLWF has also been involved in several campaigns recently, on issues as diverse as fighting global poverty, HIV/AIDS, human rights, child labour and working conditions. One of the officials I interviewed expressed that although there has been an upsurge in campaigning on part of the ITGLWF, there is still room for improvement:

What we need to do is to find how we can work best together; we need to be much more open than we have been in the past to building alliances [...] And I think coming together you’re much more powerful than you are as a sum of the separate parts.

Referring to a campaign called the Global March for the Elimination of Child Labour demanding that the ILO adopt a new convention on the issue, the success and strength of the campaign was attributed to the alliance between trade unions and other social movements, including NGOs and political organizations. And as seen in the previous chapter, the official quoted above was quite ready to consign the old economistic trade unionism to the dustbin:

I think probably I'd prefer to think of it that trade unions need to change. And they need to take on board other issues.

The ITGLWF's Agenda for Action also urges unions to:

stop operating in isolation, ignoring consumer interests and other pressure groups. Affiliates should broaden their contacts and forge alliances with others in civil society pursuing the same goals.

The German affiliate IG Metall also placed a motion to the Congress of further promoting social alliances, regarding the ITGLWF as "a big social movement". The delegate presenting the motion also underlined the need to build contacts with movements critical towards neoliberalism, for instance Attac. The call was made for every affiliate, and the GUF, to participate actively in world and continental social forums. Among the delegates I interviewed, when asked about the proper role of the Global Union Federations, the answers ranged from merely providing support to and ensuring progress in national trade unions' organizing efforts to constituting an anti-systemic global social force. And despite all the grievances of the delegate from Sri Lanka, he also emphasized that, in his opinion, the Global Union Federations are:

the *best available* means of combating or countering the global development of capitalism.

The delegates from the Dominican Republic also asserted the need to strengthen the ties between workers North and South as a means to communicate their intentions to corporations:

In these global union strategies we will not accept, no matter which conditions, this wild form of capitalism that is being imposed. That is the main role and important challenge the ITGLWF has for the next ten years

On the other hand, at the 8th World Congress the Sri Lankan delegate proposed a means to increase the leverage of GUFs (or ITSs as they were called at that time):

What I find is that there is not enough coordination between the ITSs to meet the global challenge that faces the international working class [...] [The multinationals] are concerned with operating on a global scale to extract every profit possible from the global working class and the global consumers. That can be in no way beneficial to the vast majority of mankind. [...] If we are to deal with these questions we need global strategies to deal with them.

(ITGLWF 2000:23)

This leads us back to one of the fundamental limitations of trade unionism recognized by Callinicos (1995); trade unions do not usually encompass the whole class, but only parts of it, hence *trade* unions,. According to Bakunin (year unknown), the idea of internationalism itself is not

divided among sectors or industries, but propagandizes the general emancipation of those economically exploited and politically oppressed by capital. In other words, although organization has to begin at the plant level and deal with concrete issues pertaining to different industries, solidarity will extend as workers realize the narrow limits of exclusively organizing at the local level and according to trades. Workers in one industry in one country might hence, owing both to the support they find among workers in other industries and other countries, and to the systematic opposition with which they are met from employers in all industries, become fully aware of the idea of internationalism. According to Bakunin (year unknown:unnumbered), the only means of salvation “must lie along the lines of establishing and organizing the closest practical solidarity among proletarians of the whole world, regardless of industries, or countries, in their struggle against the exploiting bourgeoisie”. The General Secretary of the ITGLWF is a strong advocate of the creation of one international for manufacturing through merging the relevant GUFs. The Sri Lankan delegate praised him for his engagement in this:

I only want to say this: that as far as the ITGLWF is concerned, we have a General Secretary who I know is very actively concerned with this question.

(ITGLWF 2000:23)

Cooperation among the Global Union Federations and also including the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is high on the agenda, and in the abovementioned ICFTU agenda for action the call for tighter links is made explicit. At the 9th World Congress of the ITGLWF the issue of merger came to the forefront already in the fraternal greetings made by the General Secretary of Union Network International¹² pleading for the ITGLWF's partnership in targeting transnationals, such as Wal-Mart, whose operations span the respective industries:

[We are facing] the same multinationals that has tremendous bargaining power in the textile, garment and leather industries where your members toil. What we should do is explore how we at UNI and textiles can develop our partnership further [...] to ensure fair labour standards not just in the shop but throughout the supply chains [...] I think it's a partnership with great potential for action.

The General Secretary of the ITGLWF, however, argued in his activities report for taking yet another step since although cooperation is a step forward:

[T]here's a lot more work to be done in this respect. [...] And we've led the way over the past years, trying to persuade our colleagues in other sectors that we should have *one* global union federation for manufacturing.

According to Breitenfellner (1997) mergers could be undertaken with a view to strengthen the unity of the international labour movement and to foster synergies by cooperating across sectors linked vertically by product chains, such as Wal-Mart. At the 8th World Congress the General Secretary justified a merger mainly by pointing to the need to mirror corporate structures:

¹² Union Network International is the global union for skills and services

Here at this Congress, many of our affiliates are in a position [of] needing to affiliate to two, three, four and in at least one case to six different ITSs. These structures were relevant in the past. There was little overlap. But the process of globalisation, the growing power of multinational companies, has changed that entirely. In manufacturing some multinational conglomerates cover every sectors in which the six ITSs are involved.

(ITGLWF 2000:24)

Related to this motive for merging is Bakunin's (year unknown) argument that an uneven development of international solidarity across industries will lead to markedly different working conditions between them. Without necessarily indicating an uneven development of solidarity, the concentration of Global Framework Agreements in certain industries, with the International Metal Workers' Federation for instance having signed nine while the ITGLWF stands at nil, at least points to unequal bargaining power (Tørres and Gunnes 2002). Although solidarity increases the bargaining power through providing unity, other factors such as worker skill, capital mobility and corporate structures might be involved. An important question for further research is hence what accounts for this uneven distribution of GFAs across industries. Another inducement for cooperation is that taking on the neoliberal agenda and tackling transnational corporations may be a serious drain on already scarce resources (Moody 1997). A last motivation identified by Breitenfellner (1997) is hence pooling resources and avoiding wasteful duplication of effort and expertise. The Global Union Federations are small organizations, the staff often consisting of only ten to thirty people, with infinitesimal incomes compared to the opponent. The ITGLWF's staff consists of just below 20 persons having one field of responsibility each, and the World Congress revealed worries on the financial issue. Being a GUF in industries mainly located in the South does not give it sufficient income from subscription fees. The General Secretary has hence issued a press release titled *Harnessing Globalisation Demands Global Unions' Unity* calling for "a practical partnership with the clear aim of shifting the direction of globalisation" with the intention to "effect a shift from reaction to anticipation, from responding to leading and from simply protesting to shaping the future".¹³

According to Wahl (2000) the credibility of the trade union struggle against neoliberalism depends on this kind of cross-sectoral approach, and he regards the division as constituting an ever increasing limitation to trade unionism. However, as the above analysis has shown, there are increased efforts to at least develop the partnership further. Several authors, such as Gallin (1999), have recently pointed out that the unity of the international trade union movement has never been stronger, and this was also recognized by one of the officials I interviewed:

I think, to be honest, until the collapse of the Berlin Wall the Global Unions, or the ITSs as we were called, spent far too much time fighting the Cold War, trying to fight an ideological campaign against communism [...] Now I think that that particular ideological divide is no longer regarded as being particularly important to us. I think the trade union movement around the world is now more united than it's ever been.

¹³ <http://www.itglwf.org/displaydocument.asp?DocType=Press&Index=890&Language=EN>

The movement has also seen increased unity across industrial sectors through the creation of “Global Unions” as a vehicle to build a common identity and platform among the ICFTU, the GUFs and the Trade Union Advisory Committee of the OECD in order to foster effective cooperation and joint action (ICFTU 2004). The fact that the ICFTU is heavily involved in building this alliance can be vital, as Gallin (1999) maintains that this organization was the greatest obstacle to constructive cooperation in the past. The merger of the ICFTU and the WCL is yet another step in the direction of bridging past divides. There is according to Gallin a huge gap between the existing reality of Global Unions as a social force and their potential, on account of both being unions and a social force. The three most important ways to realize this potential is through organizing, democratizing and politicizing. But Gallin also argues that as every end require its own means, so do policies have to be carried out by structures, and structures are obsolete when they separate what should be united and inhibit communication and cooperation. He even maintains that in a context where industrial sectors are losing their importance, a merger into general unions will entail a politicization reciting the revolutionary syndicalist slogan of “One Big Union” as a way forward. Furthermore, Gallin (1999:unnumbered) alleges that trade unions are “the only universal and democratically organized movement at world level, with an unequalled capacity for resistance [...] [Workers] only have the choice of fighting or of submitting”.

CONCLUSION

I have in this thesis examined both the external mechanisms impacting upon global unions and their internal liabilities. I started out by depicting the arguments for an international approach to resistance, but also the challenges involved in bypassing national competition for inward investment and hence jobs. Cooperation across national borders, however, requires an understanding of common interests, and chapter four dealt with how the mechanisms of global capitalism impact upon workers' solidarity. Trade unions being bodies through which this solidarity might be channelled were then scrutinized in chapter five. By employing the insights gained from the previous chapters, the potency of global unions was analyzed in chapter six. Chapter three and four hence delineated the impact of a new regime of accumulation on labour and international trade unionism, while chapter five and six delved into trade unions as agents. Based on the analysis of secondary literature, documents and the interviews conducted, I will in what follows answer my research questions.

How does the new regime of accumulation impact upon global trade unionism?

One of the objectives of this thesis was to revise Galtung's (1974) theory of imperialism and his model depicting the interest relations within and between the core and periphery. In order to do so, I will revisit regulation theory before substantiating the arguments by referring to my empirical findings. Lipietz (1986) argues that the radical theories of imperialism of the 1960s and 1970s focussed on the links between economic spaces without due consideration to the transformations going on both in the centre and the periphery and their impacts upon the division of labour. Lipietz (1982) maintains that under the former division of labour the periphery assumed the function of a 'giant thermostat', preventing the economy from overheating or running cold through providing a market for industrial goods and offering cheap raw materials. The crisis of the 1970s, resulting from slackening productivity growth and a subsequent crumbling class compromise, however altered the picture. Lipietz argues that the problem was less one of finding markets than one of driving up the rate of exploitation. The latent crisis of Fordism hence produced a quest for gains in productivity on the one hand and for an increase in the rate of exploitation through a search for cheaper wage-zones on the other. The ensuing efforts to boost national competitiveness triggered a race to the bottom in labour legislation and wages. This corresponds to Harvey's (2003) analysis of the new imperialism, in which the expanded reproduction of the Fordist era is succeeded by accumulation by dispossession. Taking Luxemburg's theory of imperialism as his point of departure, Harvey shows how the outward looking imperialism of the past is complemented by a production of internal 'outsides'. By dispossessing workers of jobs and legal protection they become the equivalent of a reserve army holding trade unions and collective bargaining in check paving the way for a rise in the rate of exploitation. The twin remedies of increasing productivity and shifting production to cheaper

wage-zones are, however, according to Lipietz (1982) only a solution for capital and not workers neither in the centre nor the periphery. The shift of production was particularly prominent in labour-intensive industries such as textiles and clothing, as recognized by both Lipietz and Fröbel et al. (1980). The fact that 160 countries are exporting textiles and clothing to markets in 30 countries is used as evidence for the global character of these industries (Kearney 2004). Hardt and Negri (2000:237), claiming the death of the nation-state, maintain that the relation between capital and labour is now stripped of any national interference: “Without that barrier, then, the situation of struggle is completely open. Capital and labor are opposed in a directly antagonistic form”. The increasing interconnectedness between national economies and the race to the bottom resulting from the beggar thy neighbour strategies opted for, have lead authors such as Radice (2001) to call for internationalism and question national alternatives to global capitalism. As was seen in chapter three, increased interconnectedness was regarded progressive by among others Trotsky (1928), and any strategy for the betterment of the plight of workers should not resort to retreating into a more or less closed national economy.

Returning to the new international division of labour, it is possible to regard the post-war era of Fordism as divided into two substructures – one industrial North and one raw materials supplying South – with their own properties and mechanisms, though interrelated through trade, or what has been termed unequal exchange. This era entailed, in the centre, a class compromise and a labour aristocracy bribed by the crumbs from the imperialist table, and hence Galtung (1974) proposed that there was no harmony of interest between the periphery in the Centre and the periphery in the Periphery. Currently, on the other hand, we witness tendencies towards a global capitalism, although it is not fully developed, and hence calls to upscale union strategies from the national to the global level (Ruccio et al. 1991, Hardt and Negri 2000, Radice 2001, Harvey 2003, Castree et al. 2004). It is global precisely in the sense of it being the same processes, such as accumulation by dispossession, operating worldwide. In addition, the introduction of lean production has provided a common experience for workers in the North and in the South, coupled with worldwide attempts to disband unions by for instance casting them as scapegoats for economic regression. The proletarians of the North are hence being deprived of their previously hard-won rights, and are fighting much the same battle as their sisters and brothers in the South, although their legal protection and working conditions are much better. On the one hand the still existent wage gaps and the relocation of industries created grounds for a hardened competition among workers in different countries (Moody 1997). The threat of relocation now haunts the textile and garment industries as the Multi-Fibre Arrangement has been phased out. It seemed, however, as though the common uncertainty *united* the ITGLWF’s affiliates rather than pitted them against each other. China was regarded as the real ‘competitor’, and since Chinese unions are not affiliated, standing together was made easier, although the attitude towards China ranged, as we have seen, from feeling pity for her workers to a more fiercely competitive stance. On the other hand, Moody (1997) and several of my informants also pointed out that the increased importance of transnational corporations has lead to a situation in which different national trade unions are facing the same employer, or their workers are at least part of a common production

system. This has strong implications for trade union strategies, as a common target fosters contact and exchange of information, and presses for common decisions on future actions. A common ground has rendered solidarity and global trade unionism a much more concrete and proactive matter. Several of my informants characterized the previous era as dominated by devoted speeches at congresses offering little in the way of planning any concrete actions, with the daily work of global unions being mainly confined to reacting to violations as they were reported. According to Moody (1997), however, effective global trade unionism requires more than simply making international connections. As the challenges faced by national trade unions became increasingly common across the world, and when the same issues needed to be raised with the same employer, then it became much easier to summon affiliates around more concrete and proactive activities at the global level. In addition, the greater understanding of being in the same boat has occasioned a shift from an aid model of global trade unionism, in which solidarity was mainly confined to financial assistance and education from Northern unions to Southern ones, to a solidarity model, in which unions partake on a more equal footing. This shift has also facilitated the move towards a more concrete and proactive global trade unionism. It might also be argued that this has occasioned a shift from a period where ideology dominated the relation between unions in the North and in the South with instances of trade union imperialism, that is, Northern unions partaking in the Cold War through propaganda and undercutting communist unions and union leaders, to a period more characterized by shared economic worries pertaining to capital mobility. Taking Trotsky's (1938) transitional programme as a point of departure, the great challenge for contemporary global unions is to get unions across the world to pull together in a similar direction in at least an attempt to impose some form of regulation on transnational corporations. I will hence turn to the issue of global unions as agents.

How are the global unions responding to the new opportunities and barriers?

Despite the changes in the objective conditions for global unions the subjective element does not always follow suit. The awareness of the need for an international approach was evident in all of my interviews, but the officials and the General Secretary nonetheless pointed out the difficulty in some cases of getting the affiliates to pull together. Much of the time the difficulties arise from having to work across national borders. Although national protectionism is a prominent challenge in maintaining unity, other factors such as different approaches to employers were recognized as having a bearing upon the successes or failures of global trade union action. However, the increased basis for and focus upon economic issues pointed out above run the risk of leading to national concessionary bargaining in an attempt to save jobs. As was seen in chapter four the officials I interviewed were quite clear on how the threat of relocation could hamstring solidarity. Two responses to global capitalism embarked upon by global unions are worldwide company networks and Global Framework Agreements (GFAs). These developments have generated optimism as they are regarded a step in the direction of increased cooperation on concrete and proactive issues. However, both of them are vulnerable to the challenges of cooperation across national borders recognized above. Moving from propagating abstract ideas to being involved in

the praxis of trade unionism also entails an increased participation of the rank and file, and is also, according to Trotsky (1938) and Bakunin (year unknown) more apt considering that the consciousness of workers is grounded in concrete day-to-day experiences. If solidarity is not some natural sentiment, but rather an outlook to be built, then grounding global trade unionism on the shop floor or at the plant level might foster proletarian internationalism. This renders the global unions more visible in the daily life of workers and by drawing in greater masses the leverage against capital might be increased. As seen in chapter five, the involvement of the rank and file might also up the militancy of the trade union movement by bypassing the more compromise-bent bureaucracy. On the other hand, the chapters on trade unions revealed inertia in the adaptation to the new regime of accumulation as the ideology of social partnership and class compromise still lingers on, especially among trade unionists from the developed countries. At the national level this might entail concessionary bargaining in pursuit of national competitiveness, hence undermining internationalism in the first place. At the global level it manifested itself mainly in agendas seeking 'social dialogue' or pleading for 'corporate social responsibility'. The delegate from Sri Lanka regarded them, as we have seen, as a major brake on the new potential for global trade unionism.

As pointed out by Olle and Schoeller (1977), one way to transcend the liability towards national protectionism is by transcending the inherent economism and politicize the global trade union movement, and another response to the new regime of accumulation is to engage in campaigns with other social movements around issues both pertaining to working conditions and workers' rights but also with a wider agenda of taking on neoliberalism. In addition, both the rules of the ITGLWF and the Agenda for Action of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) pronounced an aspiration to change the current world order in favour of one based on social justice and equality. In these campaigns there has also been an increased cooperation among Global Union Federations and between them and the ICFTU. Both the GUFs and the ICFTU have made efforts to become more visible, and the change of name from International Trade Secretariats to Global Union Federations was meant to be a repositioning as it to a greater extent reflected their purpose. Although they were still far from achieving it, the General Secretary of the ITGLWF also worked hard on the merger of all the GUFs and the establishment of one international for manufacturing. This is in accordance with Bakunin's (year unknown) proposition of forming an international organization of workers in general and not in single trades. A merger would both increase the leverage of the global unions by pooling resources and manpower and avoid duplicating activities by better mirroring corporate structures in cases such as Wal-Mart and Virgin.

China constitutes a barrier to the global trade union movement in its own right, and the latter is still quite bewildered by the magnitude of the task. As mentioned above, the prominent sentiment among my informants and at ITGLWF's World Congress was one of sympathy with Chinese workers coupled with anxiety regarding the downward pressure on wages and working conditions. I did, however, also come across more belligerent statements depicting the situation as all other nations competing against China, and that the solution is to reduce China's share of the

world market for textiles and garments. The proposed responses to the Chinese spectre were mainly focussed on making contacts at the grassroots level for the purpose of both delineating the conditions there and raising the awareness among Chinese workers of international labour standards and their rights as set down by the ILO.

Although there is almost general agreement on the need to build global trade unionism now that capital is operating at the global level, there is more discussion on the extent and mode of operation. Few contest that trade unions should be operating at several geographical scales by tailoring the strategies to different situations, that is, while upscaling is becoming increasingly important there is still room for downscaling. An argument for internationalism is, however, as seen in the third chapter, that gains made at the local level might be undermined by the same gains not being made elsewhere for reasons either of unions buying into boosterism or not having the sufficient power. Global unions have, in other words, a role to play in hampering the current race to the bottom. In much of the contemporary labour literature there is a tendency to dichotomize a more political internationalism based on networks between local unions and global unions, being allegedly top-down and economistic. On the basis of my findings in this thesis I cannot see the expediency of the dichotomy as also global unions build networks and engage in political campaigns, although refuting the grounds for dichotomizing would require further research. And as we have seen in this conclusion, the foundation for global solidarity has been strengthened and the global unions are responding by concretizing their activities and making themselves more visible. Whether global unions can constitute a global social force depends on several factors, but it seems that the most important is to wake up to the realities and shelve the ideology of social partnership and class compromise. How revolutionary the movement ought to be is open to question, but not to seek agreements and standards might be to draw the confrontational line too sharply as sustaining sufferings today pending a revolution in the long distant future would prove to be to no avail if the revolution fails to materialize.

Relevance in other contexts

Due to the thesis being based on a case study and the context being rather specific, I will finish by reflecting on the transferability of my findings. The textile and garment industries have certain particularities such as the concentration of productive activities in the South, labour-intensive operations and a large degree of capital mobility. This has impacts upon the bargaining power and force of unions. Hence, in order to be in a better position to assess the strength of global unions further research should be conducted adopting an industry-specific approach. Different industries display different geographies of production and their properties affect the leverage of trade unions organizing workers in it. Using a one-off event, the phase out of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, as a prism through which liabilities are analyzed might add to the particularity of the context of this thesis, but on the other hand my focus has been upon mechanisms pertaining to capitalism and their impact upon global solidarity and the work of global unions. Additionally, I have analyzed the liabilities of trade unions as structures and since they can be regarded as inherent in unions they

also have relevance in other industries and contexts. The textile and garment industries, being on the brink of major restructuring, were chosen deliberately as I suspected the debates on and the dilemmas surrounding the phase out of the MFA would amplify and illuminate the already existent liabilities of a global union. I have also in a few instances provided examples from other Global Union Federations where I had relevant information, although I would like to delve more deeply into them in future research.

EPILOGUE: THE EMPIRE'S NEW CLOTHES?

Some effects of the MFA phase out are already beginning to crystallize. The case of Ramatex in Namibia offers a good example of the dynamics and pressures of a deregulated garment industry. According to Jauch (2005) Ramatex established its plant in a Namibian EPZ in 2001 with the sole outlook of temporarily exploiting the 'favourable business climate' pending free reins on China in 2005. The Namibian government offered huge concessions in order to attract Ramatex, including investments amounting to over N\$100 million (or approximately US\$17 million) in infrastructure, a 99-year tax exemption and subsidized water and electricity. Ramatex has continually been expanding its activities in China, and in April this year rumour had it that Ramatex planned to close down its subsidiary in Namibia. In search of scapegoats, trade unions in general, and ITGLWF in particular, were easy prey. The morale; do not, as a trade union, ask for any returns to global capitalism as it is really counterproductive to both national industrialization and to making a living through keeping a job. Marx' (1865) warning quoted introductorily is swept under the carpet; "the miseries of the slave" seems now to be the life on offer for the majority of the world's population, and in the deregulated textile and garment industries the slave's security is lost to the argument against protectionism. However, Namibia is not the only instance. With China as "one huge non-union factory" the pressure exerted is enormous both through actual and reported relocations. The ITGLWF regards the poorest countries producing textiles and garments 'on brink of ruin' as China mops up the entire industries. The organization's website gives us a status report three months into textiles and garments trade liberalization where China is coming close to 60 % of both the US and EU markets¹⁴. And while China multiplies her garment exports, it is at the expense of other countries whose exports are in free fall. In Lesotho, depending on textiles and garments for 99 % of her export earnings, six factories have closed since January 2005. The Board of Investments envisions 58,000 job losses the coming months. Cambodia meets the same fate as 20 factories have closed throwing 26,000 workers out of job. Sri Lanka has seen 46 factories close, losing the same amount of jobs as Cambodia. Guatemala and the Dominican Republic report similar closures and the same extent of job losses. China also exerts, as we have seen, a downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Examples include employers in the Dominican Republic refusing to pay the last inflation based wage increase, in Cambodia employers demand no overtime wage premiums and Bangladesh has instated a 72 hour workweek. China is now annually producing twenty billion garments, amounting to four pieces for every person in the world. The Empire's new clothes are hence by and large made in China, and the delegate from Sri Lanka likened her growth to a well-known disease:

In a way, China is like the cancer in the capitalist system now. It's growing and growing and growing, like a huge tumour, and the whole capitalist system is now afraid because it's growing so big.

¹⁴ <http://www.itglwf.org/displaydocument.asp?DocType=Press&Language=&Index=1143> Printed 17.04.05

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMANTS

Central administration of the ITGLWF:

Mr. Neil Kearney	General Secretary of the ITGLWF Interviewed October 6, 2004 Istanbul The interview was recorded and lasted 30 minutes
Mr. Steve Grinter	Education Secretary of the ITGLWF Interviewed March 13, 2004 Newcastle The interview was recorded and lasted two hours
Mr. Douglas Miller	Project Coordinator Targeting Multinationals Project in the ITGLWF Interviewed two times on March 11 and 18, 2004 Newcastle Both interviews were recorded and they lasted about one hour and 30 minutes each

Delegates from national trade unions to the ITGLWF 9th World Congress:

Sri Lanka:

Mr. Bala Tampoe	General Secretary of the Ceylon Mercantile, Industrial and General Workers' Union (CMU) Interviewed October 4, 2004 Istanbul The interview was recorded and lasted two hours
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Mauritius:

Mr. Purmanansing Jhoomuck	Organiser and Secretary of Artisans and General Workers' Union (AGWU) and Treasurer of Mauritius Trade Union Congress Interviewed October 5, 2004 Istanbul The interview was recorded and lasted 15 minutes
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India:

Mr. G. B. Gawde	Chief Administrator of the Ambekar Institute for Labour Studies (INTUC/RMMS)
Mr. V. R. Jaganathan	The Indian National Textile Workers' Federation (INTWF)

Interviewed October 5, 2004 Istanbul
The interview was recorded and lasted one hour

Bangladesh:

Mr. Kamrul Anam	The Bangladesh Textile and Garments Workers' League (BTGWL)
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Interviewed October 6, 2004 Istanbul
The interview was recorded and lasted 20 minutes

The Dominican Republic:

Mr. Ygnacio Hernández H.	General Secretary of the Federacion Dominicana de Trabajadores de Zonas Francas y Afines (FEDOTRAZONAS)
Mr. Jacobo Ramos	Federacion Nacional de Trabajadores de Zonas (FENATRAZONAS)

Interviewed October 7, 2004 Istanbul
The interview was recorded and lasted one hour and 20 minutes

National trade union leader interviewed by e-mail:

Mr. Nazma Akter	General Secretary of Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers' Union Federation (BIGUF)
	The answers were attached as a Microsoft Word document

Others

Mr. John Stirling	Head of the Division of Sociology and Criminology at the Northumbria University
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Interviewed March 15, 2004 Newcastle
The interview was not recorded, but notes were taken.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDES

ITGLWF officials in Newcastle:

What are the ITGLWF's long-term goals? What do you consider as the means to these ends? How does the ITGLWF work? What is its strategy?

How is the structure of the organization? How is the distribution of resources, mandates and responsibilities? To what extent would you characterize the ITGLWF as a democratic organization?

Has the ITGLWF recently been involved in any strikes? If so, where and concerning what issues? How were they organized? How many workers were compensated (if any)? If there has been no strike recently, what do you consider to be an issue likely to lead to a strike in the near future?

Which changes has the ITGLWF gone through since its inception? Which changes in the world economy would you say have had the greatest impact on the ITGLWF's work? What about recent changes in the textile, garment and leather industry?

What would you say are the ITGLWF's greatest challenges? How is the organization facing up to the challenge of unorganized labour in the so-called South? What about the related challenges of informalization and casualization? Would you consider workers' different national contexts a big barrier to international trade unionism? What about the uneven development of the nations of the world?

Which issues are the most hotly debated at the ITGLWF's conferences? Are there any disputes? What about the issue of a social clause in WTO for instance? Who would you consider as the protagonists and antagonists?

What would you say is the organization's focus? Nation-states or firms/TNCs?

There has of late been some talk about the demise of the old form of trade unionism, and the rise of a so-called social movement unionism, characterized by among other things links with the wider civil society and its concern for other issues than labour, such as the environment, local issues etc. What do you think about such claims? What would you say is the future of trade unions?

Do you know the background for changing the designation of the International Trade Secretariats to Global Union Federations?

Is there any research going on in the ITGLWF? If so, around what issues at the moment? What would you consider as important topics for future research?

The General Secretary

To what extent do you consider workers'/affiliates' different nationalities and uneven development a big challenge? Is it difficult to get the affiliates to pull together? Has this changed over the years?

How gloomy a view do you take of the future of workers in the textiles/garment industry after the MFA phase out? What do you think will be the most important work in the years ahead? How are affiliates responding to the phase out?

To what extent has the MFA phase out impacted upon the sense of interdependency among the ITGLWF's affiliates?

How big a 'threat' is China to the plight of workers in the textiles, garment and leather industries? What do you personally think ought to be done about China not being affiliated to the ITGLWF? What is the official strategy regarding China?

What is your opinion on the contention that GFAs make international trade unionism more concrete and proactive? Why do you think the ITGLWF has not been able to sign any (GFAs) yet?

You have been the General Secretary for the ITGLWF for many years; what important changes (if any) has it gone through since your first years? Do you feel its position is strengthened or weakened?

Delegates:

What is your opinion on/feelings about the MFA phase out? How do you perceive the future? Who do you think will gain/lose from the MFA phase out? (How do they calculate gains/losses?):

- How big a threat do you perceive China to be regarding employment, wages and working conditions?
- Regarding the fact that China is such a huge employer in the industries concerned, what do you think about the ITGLWF not having any affiliates from there? Do you know the reason? What should be done?

What do you think the countries predicted to lose employment and export revenues should do in the wake of MFA phase out? How is your government responding? What is your opinion on that response? What is your trade union's strategy (if any)? National vs. international strategies – where do you think the weight should be placed?

What do you consider to be the ITGLWF's greatest challenges? Are there any disputes? If so, around what issues particularly? Do they paralyse the ITGLWF in any way?

To what extent are different nationalities and uneven development, in your opinion, a drag on the ITGLWF? What do you think is the main motivation for affiliating to the ITGLWF on part of different national trade unions?

There was a lot of controversy surrounding the social clause in the WTO. What is your opinion on the social clause? What about codes of conduct? What is your opinion on Global Framework Agreements? Would you consider signing such an agreement yourself? How controversial, compared to the social clause, do you consider IFAs to be?

Which, in your opinion, important changes (if any) has the ITGLWF gone through recently? Why do you think the International Trade Secretariats changed their designation to Global Union Federations?

What is an appropriate role for the ITGLWF (increased/decreased role)? What should the organization do and what should it not do (disregarding what it actually does)? What is the most important role? What is your opinion on GFAs in this regard?

To what extent do you think the MFA should be replaced by new regulations? What would be the appropriate agency to accomplish that? Nation-states? WTO? ILO? How can the ITGLWF contribute? What would you say is appropriate action on part of the ITGLWF (if any)?

APPENDIX 3: RECORDED CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS

- Fraternal Greetings: Phil Jennings, the General Secretary of UNI, October 4 2004, Istanbul
- Presidential Address: Peter Booth, President of the ITGLWF, October 4 2004, Istanbul
- Activities Report: Neil Kearney, General Secretary of the ITGLWF, October 4 2004, Istanbul